

FUSION FANTASTIC STORY

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ARENA

아레나
이제사양기

Arena

– 이계사냥기 –

- Part 2 -

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[Kokuma Translations]

Chapter 51

Flames of Life (Part 1)

Chairman Park Jin-seong had yet to find a skill that could cure his illness. It is possible that such a skill does not even exist.

But even so, there is a possibility with me.

Skill synthesis!

With the special skill that I have, the skill synthesis, I can create skills that don't exist.

As long as I synthesize correctly, that is.

In my head, I can think of one way of going about it.

The healing potion!

'It said I can use an item for synthesis.'

In the item bag, there is still some of that healing potion left over. If I use that as the item in the skill synthesis, it might create a skill that can cure illnesses.

If I can get a skill like that, not only can I use it for curing chairman Park Jin-seong, but it will be beneficial to me too. Wandering around a foreign world, I can pick up all sorts of diseases. Starting with food poisoning.

I have thought it up to here when I address chairman Park Jin-seong.

"I have one thing I would like to try out, could you wait a moment?"

"Of course."

Chairman Park Jin-seong's gaze changed. As if he is putting expectations on me.

I don't want to show others my skill synthesis so I go into the woods.

“Board retrieval.”

The board appears.

First, I retrieve the healing potion from the item bag. Then I say to the board.

“Karma prize, I want to turn this healing potion into an item.”

-Turning the healing potion (160/200 ml) in your possession into an item will cost 150 karma. Would you like to itemize it?

-Remaining karma: 300

150 karma? It's too expensive.

But I get it.

The value of the healing potion is at least worth that. Pouring it onto even a fatal wound will heal it so it is kind of like a spare life.

“I'll do it.”

-Healing potion (160/200 ml) has been itemized.

-Remaining karma: 150

I sigh. I've used up 150 karma, so I have to succeed.

“Skill synthesis.”

-Please select the skill or item.

1. Skills capable of being synthesized: spirit summons (Sylph), spirit summons (Kasa), physical buffer, guider.
2. Items capable of being synthesized: Mosin-Nagant, item bag, healing potion (160/200 ml)

*A synthesized item will be used.

“I synthesize the spirit summons Sylph and the healing potion.”

-Synthesizing spirit summons (Sylph) and healing potion (160/200ml).

-Synthesis failed.

‘Damn.’

My heart thuds as it fails.

Is synthesis not possible? Then there’s no point in having turned the healing potion into an item.

I become anxious and continue the trial.

“I synthesize the spirit summons Kasa and the healing potion.”

-Synthesizing spirit summons (Kasa) and healing potion (160/200ml).

Pat!

A light started to shine from the board.

-Synthesis success. You have acquired the flame of life (synthesis skill).

-Healing potion (160/200ml) has been used.

-Flame of life (synthesis skill): breathe the flame of life and sprout life. Possible one use per day.

*Entry level 1: weak effect on revivification and age prevention.

‘It worked!’

I shudder.

A skill that warms the cockles of life!

Right now, at entry level one, it can only weakly effect the revival and anti-senescence, but as the level increases, the skill may become more powerful and be able to cure

diseases as well.

I return to chairman Park Jin-seong.

“How did it go?”

He asks right away.

“I got a result. I will show you.”

“Hurry and show me.”

I nod my head and directly follow by saying the skill name.

“Flame of life!”

Then,

Hwaluk!

Atop my palm, a flame, small like a glimmer, forms itself.

“What is that?”

“It is a flame that revives life. Um, would you like to try it?”

“You want me to eat it?”

Chairman Park Jin-seong suspiciously looks at the flame floating in my hand.

“I’ll try it.”

“Okay.”

I hand over the flame. Chairman Park Jin-seong stares blankly at the flame, blinks his eyes shut, and puts it in his mouth.

After eating it, chairman Park Jin-seong opens his eyes and is amazed.

“Feels hot.”

“How do you feel?”

“My fatigue is completely gone. This truly is amazing! Can you make me another?”

“I can only make one a day. The explanation said it gives a weak boost towards revival and anti-senescence, but I think it may work for you in maintaining your health for now.”

“You say... one a day...”

Chairman Park Jin-seong’s eyes change again.

So, the meal is but one. If he wants another, shouldn’t there be more to the price?

I calmly await chairman Park Jin-seong’s answer.

“One a day, I wish to purchase these.”

“If the conditions are right, I have no problem providing these for you.”

“\$100,000 each.”

(TN: He says 100,0000,000 South Korean Won but USD is easy to understand)

“Excuse me?”

I’m completely surprised.

A hundred thousand dollars for one?

Does that mean he’s going to pay me 100k every single day?

At a number far larger than what I was expecting, and being an ordinary person, of course I’m surprised.

“Even though you haven’t quite experienced what its full effect is yet?”

“Doesn’t matter. Even if it cannot block the degeneration from my disease, I will pay you at least \$100,000.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong gets up from his seat and stretches out his arms and stretches some more. And he continues speaking.

“It has been a long time since my body has been so energized and full of vitality. For giving me one lively day, the price of 100k is cheap.”

“...”

“I will take one a day for a week and then get assessed by my doctor and see its effectiveness. If it is shown to have an effect on my disease recovery, I will raise the price I pay. In regards to payment, you won’t be disappointed. I am Park Jin-seong.”

This country’s wealthiest man, Park Jin-seong.

Then again, 100k for a day probably isn’t a big deal for him. His life is on the line so he’s probably willing to spend even more.

“But there is one problem.”

I seriously delve into the ‘real’ deal.

“Problem? Is the price not enough?”

“No. I have no issue with the price. The problem I wish to convey might be a problem for you as well.”

“Do tell.”

“I have a high chance of dying in the next exam.”

“What?”

“I lost all my comrades in the third exam. Going forward, I have to clear the exams alone.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong’s face is in shock.

“I heard your team is very bright and promising. There was that fellow, a Kang something, an impressive martial artist. But they all...”

“They all died. The chances are high that the Korean Arena Research Center will give up on me.”

“Oh my...”

Chairman Park Jin-seong’s face is beyond dismayed.

If I die, he has no way of getting more flames of life. He’ll lose what hope he has just found.

“It’s possible that including the one you just ate, 19 may be all that you can get.”

“That won’t do. I have finally found hope, I cannot lose it so easily.”

“I, of course, have no intention of dying. I am alone, but I will fight tooth and nail to live.”

“You, you haven’t given up yet, have you?”

“Of course not. I will live no matter what. I am informing you just in case, so you are prepared.”

“...”

He will get it. He will understand what it is I want.

I can save you, so you save me too. That’s what I’m saying.

“You, what is your location?”

“What do you mean, location?”

“The district you are in in Arena.

“I have just escaped the forest at the southeast corner of the continent. I ran west, straight through the forest of red apes and lycanthropes. I lost all my teammates to the lycanthropes...”

“I understand. I will find a way.”

At those words, I make a fist of happiness.

If chairman Park Jin-seong will step up to aid me, there is nothing stronger that could back me up. If anything, he may support me better than the national Korean arena research center.

“The research center will contact you before the day is up.”

“Contact me?”

“There is no need for you to stay with them anymore. Those bastards want money more than businesses do. Examinees without hope get rejected as worthless.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong shares the same opinion as Cha Jin-hyuk.

“Speaking of which, you were unemployed, right?”

“...yes.”

Poked in a weak spot, I flinch.

“Tsk, a young lad.”

At chairman Park Jin-seong’s scolding, I hang my head in shame. Compared to chairman Park Jin-seong who made a fortune from his bare hands, my life is embarrassing indeed.

“Get a job in the morning.”

“A job?”

“Yes. You want to get pat down by the National Tax Service? You need a reason you are getting 100k a day. I will hire you on as my personal attendant and set your monthly wage at 3 million.”

That’s 36 million a year.

This net worth is similar to some premier league soccer player.

“You may have guessed by now, but Jinseong group is recruiting examinees and

attaining majeong as well. We are researching how to turn the majeong into a new source of energy. Even though there is another purpose.”

The real purpose is to cure disease.

“Formally, the government does not approve businesses related to the Arena but it doesn’t forbid anything either. I have put a lot of support funding into the Korean arena research center so there won’t be a problem getting you out.”

And so, I am abruptly hired into Jinseong Group.



I have returned home and am resting when I really do get a phone call.

The person contacting me is none other than Cha Ji-hye.

-Hello.

“Hi.”

-A request came in for you from Jin-seong Group and it caught me by surprise. What relationship do you have with chairman Park Jin-seong?

“This and that.”

I spare my words.

Cha Ji-hye doesn’t dig deeper.

-Anyhow, Jinseong group is a big supporter of the research center and thus we couldn’t really refuse his request. In following with his request, we, the research center, will sever our contract with you, Kim Hyun-ho, do you agree?

“Yes, I agree.”

-Okay, in that case, from today onwards, our contract with you is void. And personally, I am glad. I don’t know the details of the situation, but for you, Mr. Kim Hyun-ho, receiving chairman Park Jin-seong’s aid will be more help to your survival than from us.

“Thank you for everything so far, miss Cha Ji-hye.”

-I am rooting for your ultimate survival.

“Thank you.”

And the phone call ended just like that.

Wow, how quickly this relationship with the research center wrapped up. Chairman Park Jin-seong’s power is indeed powerful.

And then a few moments later, a call comes from chairman Park Jin-seong.

-Did you get the call?

“Yes, the contract with them is gone.”

-Good, good. I will send a person tomorrow, so we can chat then. I am looking for examinees who can help you in Arena. I have asked various national centers, so the results will be in shortly.

‘Woah.’

He is really fast at getting stuff done.

Meeting him for the first time, hunting, and eating together was just this morning. And now, not even a half a day has passed and he has already moved things along this far.

I can feel what kind of person chairman Park Jin-seong is and how desperately he wants to live.

Chapter 52

Flame of Life (Part 2)

The next morning, I encountered a different kind of problem.

“Son!”

Mom wakes me up in the morning.

“What?”

“Do you know what day it is today?”

“Friday.”

“Today is the next month that you promised!”

“...!”

I now recall the promise I made my mom.

At mom’s constant nagging for me to go out to the store and fry chicken with her, I had asked her to let me slide for a month. But the next month that was promised has come already.

“Son, it is now time for you to enter the world of the fried chicken business.”

Mom looks like she is excited to boss me around at work.

‘Um.’

But I don’t have time for that. I cannot spend the time I have left before the next exam frying chicken!

With no other options, I tell her the truth about my getting a job.

“Mom, actually, I...”

“Don’t make excuses. From today on, son, you are a chicken businessman.”

“God forbid. This son has surprisingly gotten a job.”

“Huh? A job?”

“Yes, a job.”

“Son... did you get a part time somewhere? A part time is not a job.”

This ajumma.

I speak.

“Not a part time, I mean a real job.”

“What company would hire you? Is it a suspicious company?”

“No! What do you take me for?”

“You’re an unemployed son without education or qualifications. Don’t go work at some suspicious company that no one knows when it will go under and just come fry sweet and sour chicken with me, son.”

I understand. This is how much confidence mom has in me.

“Mom, do not be alarmed. For I have landed a job at Jinseong Group!”

“Ji, Jinseong Group?”

“Yep.”

Suddenly, my mom turns compassionate.

“Son, have you fallen into a delusion and avoiding reality? Stop saying nonsense and come to the store with mom, okay?”

“No, seriously, I’m telling the truth!”

“There is no way my son could get employed by Jinseong Group.”

I give her a moderate dramatized explanation of how I came to be hired at Jin-seong Group.

“So you rescued a man while you were hiking and that man turned out to be a member of the board of directors?”

“Yea. I told him I was unemployed and he said he’d give me a job. He said he’ll put me in a good one.”

“Is that true? And that ajusshi didn’t seem weird?”

“Nope.”

“Son, the world is not so easy. There’s definitely a catch.”

“Wow, I’m serious! Just trust me!”

“Are you bullshitting me? Cause you want to stay home and lay around?”

“Ajumma, stop it, would you?”

Mom is in a deep pit of mistrust with me. So much so that she calls support.

“Hey, Hyun-ji! Stop your oppa!”

“What is it?”

Hyun-ji rushes over.

Mom tells Hyun-ji that I am insisting that I have gotten a job at Jin-seong Group.

Hyun-ji hears the story and,

“Hahahahahahaha!”

She grabs her belly and rolls around in laughter. It was such an excited laugh it almost lingers in my ears like a hallucination. This bitch!

“Oppa? At Jinseong Group? Then I’ll work at Google. Haha!”

“Google doesn’t take 400 pointers on the TOEIC.”

“Hmph, Jinseong Group doesn’t take repeat civil exam taking 30 somethings either.”

“Hey now, did you leave your respect for me at the club? Why don’t you have a little more respect for your older brother, huh?”

“Oh my gosh, that’s funny! Lookit here, ajusshi. Aren’t you single? Isn’t it about time you get married? Aren’t all your friends getting hitched one by one? What are you doing by yourself?”

“Kuk...”

This cruel thing. She’s merciless.

I cannot lose like this!

“What do you mean? Don’t worry so much. I’m in the midst of something with my baby sister’s best friend!”

“Kyak! I said no to Min-jeong!”

“Hahaha! I don’t need your permission!”

“You’re dead!”

We rip at each other’s weak spots and fight. Our mom looks at us and grabs her hair in despair. Then again, I’d be in the same way if my kids were anything like us.

But then.

Ding dong~

The bell rings.

“Oh, who is this? Gas inspector?”

Mom goes out.

“Who are you?”

“Is this Kim Hyun-ho’s residence?”

“Yes, and?”

“I’ve come from Jinseong Group.”

“Huh?”

“I’ve come to escort him. Is Mr. Kim Hyun-ho inside?”

“Um, son...”

Mom, with an expression of disbelief, looks around to me.

The man that chairman Park Jin-seong said he would send is already here. Here already in the morning, his pace of work really is a like a storm.

Thanks to him, I save face and my confidence shoots the sky.

“Hah, you still think I’m lying now? Think I’ve lost it and escaping reality still?”

“Even so, how could a person from Jinseong Group come here...!”

Hyun-ji looks extremely flustered as well.

I smile wryly and place my hand on Hyun-ji’s shoulder.

“My baby sister. What did you say to me earlier?”

“That, um...”

“This oppa of yours has started work at a major corporation as of today. I guess there won’t even be any broth for you!”*

(TN: Korean saying about not even giving a little bit of something to someone you don’t like. Stew has good stuff like meat and veggies, but for someone you don’t like, you won’t even share a little of the broth with them.)

“No, oppa! I mean, elder brother!”

Hyun-ji’s behavior suddenly turns respectful.

“Should I prepare breakfast for you? I’ll speak formally from now, elder brother?”

“It is too late for that, you wicked creature.”

“Aww, oppa!”

Hyun-ji attaches to my arm.

Regardless of her actions, I head to the entryway where the man is and ask him to wait a little bit.

“Of course, take your time. I will wait for you in the parking lot.”

He’s Park Jin-seong’s driver that I saw yesterday. He politely answers and heads down first.

I hurry and wash up and change.

I have now at least told my family that I have gotten a job so I take out the suit I never wear except for on a few occasions.

“Oppa~”

Hyun-ji appears, pretending to be cute. She just shoves her way into my clothes and takes out a tie.

“I’ll put your tie on for you, oppa.”

“Hoho, I’m so grateful. What is my rude little sister doing?”

“Aw, there’s nothing I want.”

Hyun-ji continues to show aegyo and ties the tie around my neck.

But why are her hands so familiar with tying a necktie. Who in the world has she been practicing this on?

“Thank goodness there is nothing you want. I thought maybe you came in here asking for spending money.”

“Aw, oppa! I’ll get you breakfast every morning, okay?”

“Meh. We’ll see.”

“Hehe, have a good day, elder brother!”

I take out my dress shoes in the entryway and extend my hand out to my mom who is staring, still finding all of this hard to believe.

“Mom, your son’s going to work now. Work hard, fighting!”

“Uh, yeah...”

I leave the house.

At the apartment lobby, the man is waiting. I get into the Benz he is driving and we head out.

Jinseong Group’s headquarters are in Gangnam but the direction we are headed in is Jincheongun of Chungbuk. It’s the vacation house from yesterday.

“You’ve arrived?”

Chairman Park Jin-seong has already prepared everything for hunting and is waiting for me.

“Hunting again?”

“Yesterday was hardly a hunt. Today, I want to hunt right, without your special skills. More so, there’s something you should give first?”

He’s asking for the flame of life.

I nod my head.

“Okay, I will give it to you while we are out hunting.”

“Sounds good.”

We take all the provisions that the groundskeeper old man has prepared for us and we start our hunt.

When we are left just the two of us, I make the flame of life and hand it over to chairman Park Jin-seong.

Chairman Park Jin-seong eats the flame of life and happily smiles.

“I can definitely feel the energy. I feel as if I take one consistently every day, it will even cure my illness.”

The flame of life clearly has an effect.

Chairman Park Jin-seong was having such difficulty yesterday, and today he is taking the lead, hiking well up the mountain.

It seems the German shepherd we brought has caught wind of an animal because he starts sniffing really hard.

Park Jin-seong takes a look at the print on the ground and says.

“It’s an elk.”

We follow where the German shepherd leads us. We move together and have a conversation.

“I received word from the Nordic exam group yesterday.”

“What is the Nordic exam group?”

“Five Nordic nations and associated territories have joined to found an international agency.”

“...?”

I am my usual naïve self and chairman Park Jin-seong clicks his tongue at me.

“Are you ignorant or are all young people nowadays like you?”

“I am the common young person today.”

“This country is in trouble. It only says its global but it’s not very global at all.”

According to chairman Park Jin-seong’s explanation, the Nordic nations include five northern European countries, which are Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.

In addition, the three associated territories are Greenland, the Aland Islands, and the Faroe Islands.

The Nordic Exam Group was established for the Arena and supporting examinees, founded by those Nordic groups.

They are similar to other countries in that they gather majeong in efforts to turn it into a new energy source, but more than anything, they are loyal to examinees and regard their survival as their utmost goal.

“They tend to center around examinee survival and thus showed a positive reaction to your problem.”

“The Nordic Exam Group’s examinees will help me?”

Chairman Park Jin-seong nods his head.

“More than anything, you are now a 3rd turn examinee. Helping a 4th turn is not that hard for veterans that have passed the 10th turn. Of course, I have arranged the price for that aid.”

“How much is the price?”

“It’s nothing. I have arranged to give \$10 million USD to each examinee that helps you.”

‘\$10M USD is nothing?!’

I’m astonished.

I’m belittled by the scale of his actions, giving that money because of me.

I can tell chairman Park Jin-seong is doing everything he can to overcome his illness.

‘Thank goodness.’

For having caught the attention of Chairman Park Jin-seong, and the huge luck I had in having a skill that he wanted.

“But because we don’t know what kind of exam you will get for your 4th turn, they say they want to meet you in person and discuss.”

“Me personally?”

“Honestly, I spilled the sauce on something to intrigue them.”

“You mean the spirit summons?”

“Indeed. From what I have heard, there is no examinee in the Nordic Exam Group either that has the spirit summons skill either. That’s why they are interested in you. And thanks to that, we get their aid.”

“That you did this all in one day, you really are amazing.”

“Yesterday, due to the flame of life I received from you, I was overflowing with energy. And because of it I was able to drive through a lot of work.”

“But you spent \$10M USD for me...”

“Don’t mention it.”

“...”

“You just have to not die. Survive your 4th and your 5th and so on and save me. That is enough. That much is what you owe me.”

“Yes, I will survive, no matter it.”

“Okay, now, tell me some about what you encountered in the Arena. I wish to know how you cleared your past exams.”

“Alright.”

That day, we hunted together, and I told him of the things I went through as an

examinee.

Chairman Park Jin-seong definitely knows how to deal with people.

He listens closely to what I say and admires and pities and makes for a good audience.

“That angel was right. You are not an average person at all.”

“You think so?”

“I do. The decisions you made during the exams aren’t average.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong looks most pleased with himself.

“I expected as much but hearing your story, I can rest easy now. You are not one to die so easily. If I fully support you, going forward, you will do well in passing these exams alone.”

Going forward...

But to be frank, chairman Park Jin-seong needs me only until his disease is cured. There’s no way to know what will happen after.

So what?

A relationship that is beneficial to both is the best relationship.

Just as he needs me, I too most definitely need his help and will receive it.

At the very least, I can now start to see a hope in my future that wasn’t there before.

Chapter 53

Outcome (Part 1)

Half the day went by and it started to get dark and we succeed at hunting. When the German shepherd shot forward and bit and held on, chairman Park Jin-seong shot it.

I chuck the elk over my shoulder and head back towards the vacation home and on our way, chairman Park Jin-seong is grinning ear to ear.

“Starting tomorrow, come to work at this location.”

“...I’m sorry?”

“It’s nice here. There are no people so it’s easy to practice your skills, the air is good, and there’s a person here who will feed you.”

At those words, I have no response. I’m supposed to come to work here in this mountainside every day?”

“Doesn’t Jinseong Group have a location set aside for examinees?”

“We only have a center where we gather information on the Arena. We don’t manage examinees like that.”

“What?”

“No matter how much we analyze at the research center, how could we know any better than examinees themselves? The job that Jinseong Group does is give out salaries, gather majeong, and share information we get from other agencies. Proactive things like practicing skills should be done by examinees.”

“Then what about things like a practice facility?”

“I’ve been told training facilities are all useless. You’ve been to the Korean Arena Research Center? Were there any people in the training rooms?”

“..”

Now that I think about it, there was no one in the training floors at the research center. But the facilities were great.

“Just leaving it up the examinee himself is what’s best. Having someone who has never been to the Arena tell you how to do this or that is only a distraction. Also, the examinees I have are usually past their 10th turn.”

Everything he’s saying makes a lot of sense.

“It’s not that far from your house to here. Start coming here to work from tomorrow.”

“But I don’t have a car...”

“Why not?”

Chairman Park Jin-seong randomly takes out a set of car keys from his pocket. It’s a response as if he was waiting for my answer.

But it’s not a normal car key.

“What is this?”

“I used to drive it out for hunting and now it’s yours.”

“You’re giving me a car?”

“It’s a 3-year-old model. You get it now.”

“This. This logo looks like a Porsche?”

Yep.

The item that chairman Park Jin-seong just casually threw me is a special and luxurious Porsche car.

“Don’t use domestic cars. The airbags don’t go off.”

Hmm, an automobile CEO might grab his collar for that.

“I, um, I don’t know how to drive...”

“Don’t you have a license?”

How did he know I have a license? What does he take private information for?

“I did but I got it 6 years ago.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong yells in frustration.

“My goodness, lad, is there nothing you know how to do at the age of 30? Why is a young person like you living like this?”

He blatantly attacks me and it gets me fired up!

“That’s true, since I can’t do anything right except for saving your life, I guess my life really amounts to failure. Damn, why am I so incapable!”

“Ah, well, it happens.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong quickly returns to his former state.

“Anyway, I’ll leave a person here to teach you how to drive. Learn and drive here tomorrow.”

“And you?”

“I’m going to come here every morning for exercise. I have to eat the flame and anyway, the business stuff gets taken care of by my children now.”

On recent news or newspapers, there are articles ‘Chairman Park Jin-seong’s health declining’ and ‘start of new management’ are circulating.

People probably think that chairman Park Jin-seong is at the hospital or at home pondering if today or tomorrow is the day.

But the truth is he is energetic and out hunting with me.

I get bored and jokingly ask.

“So I heard that lately Jinseong Group is gyro dropping?”

Chairman Park Jin-seong’s face becomes gloomy. Haha, there is probably only me that can make a joke like this with the legendary chairman Park Jin-seong. I really have some nerve.

“I’m sure it’s because the people are surprised. My sons don’t have a lot of experience either.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong smirks.

“The stock will recover as soon as I’m back.”

“I’m sure it will.”

“I will live no matter what and return. It’s not time for me to die yet.”

I can sense his strong will. I get a lump in my chest.

In the Arena, I have to fight for my life. To live... A thing that sure is not a for sure thing for me.

Yet there is a person who is not an examinee with the same strong will to survive and working as hard to do it. Seeing others with terminal illnesses not giving up and trying to overcome it gives me courage.

We return to the vacation house and hand the elk to the old man.

The old man deals with the elk and puts it in the freezer and grills the boar we caught yesterday. This time not with red wine but with rice wine.

Chairman Park Jin-seong, unlike a sickly old man, scarfs down a serving of the meat and drink. Seeing this, the old groundskeeper smiles in satisfaction.

‘There is definitely an effect from the flame of life.’

I feel a little regret. If I could make a lot, I would give my mom some. Hmm, she’d be alarmed and ask what is this flame. I guess I could secretly put it in her mouth while she’s sleeping?

After our meal, I see the two cars parked behind the vacation house.

One is the Benz that chairman Park Jin-seong rides around in, and another, black with sleek and elegant lines, a gorgeous SUV. And the Porsche logo right there in the front is a lasting impression.

“Is this a Porsche Cayenne?”

“It is, it’s three years old but she’s not bad.”

She’s not bad at all. I’m not sure but it’s about a \$100,000 SUV.

“You’re really giving me this?”

“You said you have no car. I don’t ride it anyway.”

“Thank you so much.”

“If you’re thankful, drive it well. And don’t die in a car accident or anything.”

“I won’t die so pathetically, don’t worry.”

“Don’t die heroically either, you. Live no matter what. Isn’t that how I’ll keep living?”

“Got it.”

“I’m going to go now, learn to drive.”

“Will do.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong pats me on my shoulder and then gets into the Benz. His entourage escort him and only one guy stays behind.

“I received an order to teach you how to drive.”

“Okay, let’s start.”

I let out a sigh and begin practicing how to drive. I find it interesting that the key box is on the left side, but I turn on the knob and vroom- a smooth engine sound emanates.

From the engine sound to the leather against my back to the interior design, it is all a work of art.

‘Is this really my car?’

In excited glee, I learn to drive.

When I was getting my license, I remember failing the driver’s test three times. I really have no skill with driving. But oddly enough, this time, I pick it up right away.

“You are doing really well.”

I even get a compliment.

How is this possible? Do I actually have driving skill?

No way. I know. I’m a terrible driver.

‘It’s the reflexes skill!’

I know the secret.

Its thanks to the reflexes synthesis skill. Because of the reflexes, I get how to use the handle and brake and they are more familiar to my body.

As I get the handle of it, and to experience road driving, I drive through the south main road all the way to Cheonan. Then we arrive at my apartment at Cheonan and I practice parking, easily.

“Maybe because you already have your license, but you learned very quickly.”

“It’s all thanks to your good teaching.”

“No, no. Anyhow, you have definitely learned so I’ll be on my way now.”

“Okay, got it.”

I send the man away and stay awhile inside the Porsche, taking it all in. This is my car!

A foreign car isn’t the issue.

\$100,000 a day!

That is the amount I get from chairman Park Jin-seong.

‘I’m rich!’

If only I can survive.

4th, 5th, 6th... if only I can survive the upcoming exams! If I can, I can live without want for anything.

My will to live grows stronger.

It may be that chairman Park Jin-seong’s will to live is like this too. The more you have, the harder it is to leave it all behind.

‘I don’t want to die!’

Hye-su.

Joon-ho.

Is this what you guys would have felt?

If you were all alive, you might have had the same opportunity as me. If only you were alive!

“Hu hu hu...”

I laugh. But tears come out.

I’m sorry.

I’m really sorry. I’m so sorry that I couldn’t save any of you.

I sob in the parking lot.



I don't exactly tell my family that I have come to possess a Porsche Cayenne.

But later that night, I get caught.

Hyun-ji had walked into my room with coffee and snacks to bribe me with when she saw the Porsche keys on my desk.

"Huh? Oppa! This is a Porsche key!"

"Huh? Ah..."

"Where did you get it? Huh? Hmm? Where? Is this yours?"

"Well, that..."

"Kyak! Mom! Sis! Look at this!"

Hyun-ji takes the car keys and goes to the hallway. How rude, if you asked me questions at least give me the time to respond!

Mom and noona storm into my room and interrogate me.

Eventually, I spit out some weird story about how the director member I rescued from the mountain not only gave me a job but also this Porsche as a gift."

"Really? And you didn't sign some sort of odd contract when you received this?"

Noona asks in disbelief and I say no. In the end I end up telling her I'll show her my contract as proof. I should tell the chairman about that.

"How is this possible?"

Mom inspects the car keys suspiciously, touching it and mumbling.

What a house steeped in mistrust. Just let it go already!

Only Hyun-ji is excited and prancing about.

“Oppa! Drop me off at school tomorrow! In the Porsche! Porsche!”

My head feels tense.

Then the next morning.

As arranged, I am getting ready to go to work at the mountain home when suddenly, Hyun-ji is ready to go to school and quickly rushes out of her room.

“Oppa~ You have to go with Hyun-ji. You have to take your cute baby sister to school.”

“Take the train.”

“Aw, the subway is scary. There are too many perverts.”

“What pervs. Go on! Tsk.”

“Aw, oppa!”

Hyun-ji latches on and complains. She sticks like glue to me and when we get to the parking lot and she sees the black Porsche Cayenne, she screams and heads for it.

As if she had turned into a racing model, she crosses her legs atop the hood and takes a multitude of selfies.

I push the switch and open the car doors and Hyun-ji hurriedly gets into the passenger seat and takes more selfies. I slowly start to worry if my baby sister is in her right mind.

I turn the car on and drive and next to me, Hyun-ji’s phone keeps going off. She must’ve have uploaded the pictures to her social media accounts already.

Hyun-ji is excitedly exchanging text messages.

Then she giggles and speaks to me.

“Oppa, Min-jeong said she loves you. But she said you rejected her?”

“ ... ”

“She said she’s being honest. She won’t give up. Haha! I told you, she’s not in her right mind.”

Cause she’s your friend.

Hyun-ji’s school is in Cheonan and we get there quickly. We enter the very lax university that Hyun-ji was able to be accepted into. Her and I quickly draw the attention of many students.

“Oppa, thank you! I love you! Have a good day at work. I’ll make a tasty dinner!”

Being cute to the end. As soon as she gets out the car, her friends crowd her and start to ask if I really am her oppa.

I click my tongue and back out of the school.

Chapter 54

Outcomes (Part 2)

When I arrived at the mountain home, I ate the sandwich and milk that was prepared for me by the old groundskeeper headed right into the woods.

The urgent problem that has been given to me is to test out all my skills and learn an appropriate fighting style.

I'm thinking I'll test out all my skills first before deciding how to use my remaining 150 karma.

"Board retrieval."

The board appears in front of my eyes.

"Show me all my skills."

As I say so, the words on the board change and list out all the skills I have.

-Showing all acquired skills.

-Main skill: spirit summons (entry level 1)

-Assist skill: physical strength buff (entry level 5), guider (entry level 1)

-Special skill: skill synthesis

-Synthesis skill: divine protection of wind (entry level 1), divine protection of fire, (entry level 1), reflex (entry level 1), flame of life (entry level 1)

Thanks to the synthesis skill, I've increased my number of skills quite a bit. Each one is useful and none are a waste and it makes me happy.

"Show me the ones among these that can be raised a level with 150 karma."

-Showing skills that can be raised a level with 150 karma.

-Assist skill: guider (entry level 1)

-Synthesis skill: divine protection of wind (entry level 1), divine protection of fire (entry level 1), reflexes (entry level 1), flame of life (entry level 1)

They are all entry level 1 skills. I fall into pondering on which of these to level up.

First, take out the guider. Raising the level on this would just be a waste.

The flame of life is also out. Even if I raise it, it's only good for chairman Park Jin-seong, and not much use to me.

'Then the divine protection of wind, divine protection of fire, or reflexes, one of those three. I'll decide after testing out all these.'

I decide to lightly experiment with all the skills.

"Sylph."

-Meow.

A slender cat appears and delicately sits on my shoulder.

"Will you find me a boar?"

-Meow.

Sylph quickly flits away.

I decide to make my opponent a boar. Other than a vicious boar, there really isn't much else out in these woods.

Sylph returns pretty fast and points to the right. Following her guidance, I start to lightly run.

"Divine protection of wind."

I start the skill.

And something amazing happens.

Pat!

“Huh?!”

Every time I take a step, wind blows from my feet and my body is lifted a little bit. Just like it sounds, it feels like I’m running on air.

Lightly, lightly, due to the wind, my body is lifted into the air.

At first, it’s difficult to get my balance, but because of the reflex skill, I quickly adjust to it.

‘Let’s get some speed!’

I really push my feet into the ground and the force from my feet becomes stronger.

Paat!

I easily jump forward 2 meters.

“Hahaha!”

Using the big jump, I bolt forward running.

Jump, jump, I speed forward at an incredibly fast pace.

I was moving so fast that not even 30 seconds passed before I reached upon the boar that Sylph was leading me to.

“Chot!”

With a yell, I take a big hard step and jump up.

The biggest jump is 4 meters.

Hopping as if I’m flying, my eyes meet that of the boar.

“Chweek?!”

The boar is taken by surprise and falters back a few steps. But from his nostrils he breathed out fumes, building up for a fight.

Of course, I am not worried.

I have the physical strength buff entry level 5 and thus can take the power of the boar's attack with my strong body and quick reflexes.

I make a left jab towards the boar.

Pung!

"Gwek!"

Wind blows from my fist and lands on the boar's face.

'I can fight like this.'

I attack the boar with a series of jabs. And every time, a gust of wind lands on the boar's face.

But the power of the gust of wind doesn't seem all that strong. The boar keeps taking the hits and continues to charge at me.

I use all the strength I can gather to punch, but the gust of wind with all my strength cannot stop the boar's advance.

"Chet!"

I easily dodge to the left. Like a bullfighter, I avoid the attack and counter with a light jab.

The best fighting technique when using the divine protection of wind is out boxing.

But to speak more accurately, its more useful in avoiding but not that much a help with attacking.

'Is this because this is entry level 1? Then I suppose the divine protection of fire won't be that strong either.'

Even if I shoot out the fire from my fists, I'm thinking it won't be strong enough to turn the boar into whole roast boar. Then again, these are all entry level 1, I guess I shouldn't expect so much.

'Huh? Hold up... '

Something flies across my brain.

'If I combine the fire and wind, will they become strong?'

I try it out right away.

"Divine protection of fire!"

Then I punch with full force at the boar. From my first, a gust of wind and flame come out at the same time.

Pung-!

"Gwek!"

The boar screams and backs up.

My thinking was correct. The flame and wind basically make an explosion.

The aftermath of the explosion hits the boar on one side of its face and its fur gets singed. It's the level of a light burn.

'Using the divine protection of wind and the divine protection of fire together makes for something threatening at least.'

When I was using just the gust of winds, the boar took a few hits and then didn't fear it at all.

But when the fire rode the gust of wind and exploded, it was hot and the boar was scared of it.

Pung! Puung!

"Gwek!"

The boar was in pain and backed up far away. But it wasn't a defining blow.

'I have to hit it directly for effect.'

My body at the physical buffer entry level 5 is the limits of human physicality. It will most likely be more effective to use this power and directly hit instead.

But as I try to directly hit it, another problem presents itself.

It's hard to hit it.

The opponent isn't a human and because the boar is low to the ground, it's difficult to attack.

I have to kick instead of using my fists but that isn't easy either.

Whenever I get close, the boar rushes at me.

With a boar that rushes strongly at me, I can be the one to suffer if I try kicking it head on.

After i avoid it lightly to the side, I quickly kick the boar in the side.

Pung!

At the same time as the kick lands, the explosion from the wind and fire goes off.

"Gwek!"

The boar steps back.

'A slight miss!'

I didn't get a good kick. My posture was messed up for it.

On top of that, I've never learned any fighting so I wouldn't have any know how.

'Know how?'

I know how I'm going to use that 150 karma now.

“Board retrieval!”

While I’m countering this boar I retrieve my board and shout.

“Karma prize, raise level on reflex skill!”

As I do so, I can see the words on the board change.

-Reflex (synthesis skill) level has been increased.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): get the skill to maneuver body.

*entry level 2

-remaining karma: 0

‘Done!’

I once again escape the boar’s lunge. And like last time, I kick the boar in its side.

Buk!

Pung!

“Gwek!”

The sorrowful scream of the boar!

This time, it landed correctly. It is thanks to the reflexes and its resulting increased athleticism.

I take advantage of the boar faltering and nimbly kick it again in the face.

It’s a style kind of like taekwondo. I keep my spacing/distance and extended my kick towards the boar.

When the boar is turned raggedy from burns, the wind protection is up.

‘15 minutes went by fast.’

As the wind protection disappears, only the fire comes out.

Hwa lu luk!

There is no explosion so the power is weaker.

But the boar has already been injured a lot and is exhausted. It feels like animal cruelty and I feel terrible. I decide to end it.

“Sylph, finish it.”

-Meow!

The end is a blade of wind.

It's the flaw with the bare hands fighting. With an opponent with good endurance like this boar, it is difficult to end a life with my bare hands with the killing power I have.

‘I should use bare hands fighting more for defense. If I get close and fight, Sylph can attack from farther away.’

The boar, with a slit throat, falls over and dies.

The fight is over and coincidentally, my phone vibrates.

[Chairman Park Jin-seong: where are you?]

[Me: I just caught a boar.]

[Chairman Park Jin-seong: Really? Bring it over.]

Wait, this oldie, considering his age, he texts really fast. Is it cause he's the owner of a IT business that makes smartphones?

I pick up the boar and return to the mountain home. It was a short fight but it's a rather large boar and not in vain.

“Why is it all burnt up?”

The groundskeeper elder asks as he handles the boar.

Meanwhile, I hand a flame of life to chairman Park Jin-seong.

Chairman Park Jin-seong eats it and his face looks refreshed.

“I live for these.”

“Is it tasty?”

I ask because I’m actually curious. It’s because I am the owner of these flames and I’ve never gotten to taste one.

“It’s not tasty per se, but the moment you eat it, the fatigue goes away and the energy flows and feels great. I can definitely feel myself getting healthier.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong looks to be in a good mood today.

“Yesterday, my physician examined me and complimented me and said my condition looks good. I’m supposed to go back in a week and get another exam.”

“I hope it has an effect.”

“It will. That’s how I feel. I am so full of energy so it must have an effect.”

I hope too that it does have an effect. That way, I can get more money.

“Oh right, I received word from the Nordic Exam Group. They want to see you next Monday.”

“Where?”

“Denmark. You can come with me.”

“You’re going to go too?”

“I have to eat the flame. I can’t miss it even for a day.”

“...”

I can sense his strong will to improve his body. Then again, his life does depend on it.

“You’re coming for me, I feel a little bad about it.”

“Don’t be, my kids are running the business so I’m free. I’ll just take this opportunity to visit my North European offices.”

“Then we’re going on your private jet?”

“Of course. You’ll come with me.”

Ah, he’s like a rock. I kind of liken it to the father that takes you to preschool.

I did want the protection of chairman Park Jin-seong’s strong entourage but I had no idea I would get this much support.

“Don’t be burdened by it.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong is like a ghost that reads my mind.

“You deserve that much. You are this Park Jin-seong’s lifeline.”

“...”

“Only think about surviving the exams. If you survive, you will get all the wealth and honor. And if you can cure me, I will count you as my savior and you and your family, I will take care of. That is a promise chairman Park Jin-seong is making to you.”

“...I understand.”

That day’s lunch entrée is a gridiron grilled boar. With bean paste soup and kimchi and all sorts of side dishes and multigrain rice is all incredibly tasty. His cooking skills are worthy of chairman Park Jin-seong’s praise.

Seeing the old groundskeeper’s fierce loyalty, it makes me think that chairman Park Jin-seong is worthy of trusting. He repays as much help as he receives which is why he gets such loyalty.

‘I have gained a good helper.’

Chairman Park Jin-seong is like a lifeline to me, an examinee in crisis with no teammates.

The skill synthesis and flame of life have saved me.

Chapter 55

Outcomes (Part 3)

I make two labor contracts with chairman Park Jin-seong.

One is the real contract outlining our agreement as examinee and sponsor. The weekly wage is \$700,000, and I receive that incredulous amount every Monday. There is, of course, the attached option for an increase based on my results.

The other is a fake contract.

This is purely a fake labor contract to show my family. As a contract intended to show my unbelieving mother and noona, I am employed as an entourage/guard/secret service to the chairman with an annual salary of \$54,000.

When I take this fake contract home and show it to mother and noona, it's only then that they believe me. And Hyun-ji's aegyo gets stronger.

Her son has just been employed by a huge company, yet mom doesn't seem joyed by it.

"I was going to hand over the business to you and retire..."

"Mom, I'm sorry. Fried chicken must not be in this son's fate."

"Oh gosh, I guess then I'll have to give it to Hyun-ji."

Hyun-ji who was getting to me coffee, is taken aback.

"Me?"

"Yes, you, since my son just got a big job, the only unemployed person left in this house is you."

"I'm not unemployed! I'm going to get a job!"

“Hyun-ji, looking at your grades or your TOIEC (400) or your character, employment is kind of out of the question.”

“I can do it! And yeah okay about the grades and my score, but what’s wrong with my character?”

“You hate doing hard work so you wiggle out.”

“What! I will get employed! I can get employed!”

“Think carefully. Let’s say you do get a job, it’ll be at some average small business, making what, \$20,000? In that situation, what do you say to just taking over mom’s business?”

“I don’t want to do fried chicken. I’m going to be a career woman.”

As Hyun-ji says the words ‘career woman’ I’m aghast. Noona looks to be too.

Mom sits close to Hyun-ji and speaks in a calm voice.

“Hyun-ji, think carefully, okay? Don’t you like luxury things?”

Nod.

“Don’t you want to drive around in a nice car and spend loads of money and play?”

Nod, nod.

“Then should your choice be to join a small business that who knows will fail when in this poor economy, or the fired up fried chicken store?”

“Well, um...”

I can see the dilemma on Hyun-ji’s face.

“So what if the work is a little hard? What if it is a chicken business? You can spend that hard earned money on nice clothes and nice bags and vacation abroad.”

“Yeah, but I...”

“Think hard. What choice will you not regret in 10 years?”

“Yeah, your brains are bad so just ease your suffering, manual labor suits you.”

Noona coldly agrees.

Then again, mom and noona, someone has to think for Hyun-ji.

I speak up.

“Yeah, Hyun-ji. I’ll leave the fried chicken business to you. Chicken fryer lady in the day, and attractive club-goer at night! Doesn’t it sound good?”

I am the oppa that thinks for Hyun-ji most of all.

“Hu ah ang! I’m going to study! I’m going to study and get a good job somewhere!”

Hyun-ji runs into her room crying.

I laugh and roll around on the floor.

Poor thing, but you reap what you sow. Why not try a little harder?

“I think it’ll work with a little more persuading.”

Says mom with a venomous glint in her eyes.

“When she graduates college, I’ll cut off her allowance. When she needs the money, tell her to work at the store. When she gradually gets used to the store work, eventually she will...”

The student has become the master. Noona has an even more venomous and elaborate plan.

“Oh my, yes, that’s a good idea. Once she tastes money she won’t be able to think about living off a rat’s tail of a salary.”

I look at the 99.99% DNA that is shared between mother and daughter and shiver. I am so glad that their target is not me. It’s as if I can already see the image of Hyun-ji frying chicken.



Even on the weekend, I go to the mountain house every morning. It's because I have to give the flame of life to chairman Park Jin-seong.

However, I can get off work at any time so I have no problem with it. More than anything, the weekly wage is \$700,000. There's no way I'd have a problem with this.

Outside of that, chairman Park Jin-seong listened to every request I made.

I said I needed more 7.62mm bullets for my Mosin-Nagant and he immediately contacted the Korean Arena Research Center and received a couple boxes.

When I said I wanted to learn martial arts he put one of his personal guards on it. His age is 28, younger than me, but he is a national high school boxing bronze medalist and district muay thai competition winner.

"I don't think you'll be needing the basic exercise."

Having seen my body that is enhanced to the human limit, guard Choi Hyuk looks a bit jealous. Then again. Seeing my chiseled and detailed muscles surprises myself too.

"I will begin by teaching you the basics."

Choi Hyuk adjusts my imitation jab movement.

From the effect of the reflex/athleticism skill, I get the right jab movement.

Following the jab, I learn the straight and basic footwork. I practice those until the day gets dark. At night too I go up Taejo mountain and repeat and practice until dawn.

The next day, Choi Hyuk sees my footwork and jab and straight and is surprised.

"Okay, you are doing it well."

"Really?"

"But you still need to repeat it every day so that in a fight it comes out naturally as a reflex."

“Okay.”

That day, I practice by hitting the special sand bag that Choi Hyuk brought until it is ragged. Normally, practicing that hard like that would tear at the knuckles but my fists are fine due to the physical strength buff.

The weekend passes and Monday comes around.

Like always, I give a flame of life to chairman Park Jin-seong and ask.

“The guard, Choi Hyuk. Is it okay that he knows I am an examinee?”

“He knows, so it doesn’t matter.”

Choi Hyuk is not just a guard but he belongs to the 3rd secretary office.

The 3rd secretary office has people that do things that cannot be made open to the public, and martial artists like Choi Hyuk are also included there.

‘Now that I think about it, that Lee Jung-shik guy that came to me that first day said he was the head of the 3rd secretary office.’

Only then am I convinced and I relax and learn from Choi Hyuk.

That day, I don gloves and a helmet and do some simple sparring, and attack Choi Hyuk with the footwork and jab, and straight that I learned.

In terms of skill I am clearly disadvantaged so I am hit more often. But because of the physical strength buff entry level 5, my endurance for one, and my reaction and reflections are far better and I am able to overpower him.

Honestly, even with this difference, in the end we tie, and that makes Choi Hyuk pretty incredible.

Even though I pushed forward, if this were a boxing match, Choi Hyuk probably would have received more points.

“Even if you only learn the defense really well, it looks like there is no way I can win. But you still have a lot to learn so you must try hard.”

“Yes, thank you.”

After that, I learn blocking and practice defending from Choi-Hyuk’s one-sided attacks. I had no idea there were so many kinds of blocking.

Evening comes and I take my favorite horse, my Porsche cayenne, and go home.

‘Wait, isn’t Monday the day I get paid?’

I log into my mobile banking on my smartphone. And then I verify the amount...

‘Huk!’

Is this the feeling of adrenaline rushing my body? When I look at the balance, it is hard for me to maintain reality.

A million.

It has been five days since I met chairman Park Jin-seong and I gave him the flame of life and the money that is there is twice the amount, 10 million.

I am astonished and I call chairman Park Jin-seong.

I was worried that a magnate like chairman Park Jin-seong might not take a call from me, but thankfully he answers right away.

-Hi, whats the matter?

“I am sorry for calling so randomly. Can you talk?”

-That’s alright. If it’s a call from you, I must always receive it. Are you calling because the money you got today?”

“Yes, it is too much...”

-I had a physical today.

In that one sentence is the explanation for why the amount is higher than promised.

Chairman Park Jin-seong speaks in a bright voice.

-I've been told the cancer cell metastasis has halted. Not only has it stopped, but, albeit slightly, it has shrunk. We'll have to watch a while longer, but I'm sure I'm getting better.

"Congratulations."

-I felt so good which is why I gave you more, so don't be burdened by it.

"Thank you."

-No need. But this doesn't mean I will always give you twice the amount. There's the thing with the Nordic Exam Group and I am spending a great deal on you too. You understand?

"Yes, of course."

He did take me out of the research center, and I have been promised aid from the Nordic Exam Group. With all these happenings, the expense incurred for me might be just a bit shy of 5 million already.

-Do not be disappointed. If I am for sure cured, you are my savior. The savior to this Jin-seong Group's Park Jin-seong.

"I am not disappointed at all. Even now, this is plenty."

-Mm. Anyway, we're going to Denmark on Wednesday so prepare well.

"Yes, do not worry."

-Then I'll see you tomorrow.

And the phone call ended like that.

I look at the mobile banking screen on my smartphone and smirk.

'Was making money this easy?'

Money that is hard for people to make in a lifetime, was built in five days. I become suspicious if this is reality or not.

But it is reality.

The value on my screen before my eyes is definitely...

“A million?!”

“Oh geez, you surprised me!”

From behind me is a shocked scream and because of it I’m shocked too.

‘What is this?!’

I quickly turn around.

...It’s Hyun-ji.

In both hands, as snacks for me, are coffee and sweet red bean bun on a tray. This TOIEC 400 pointer baby sister of mine, you are very persistent.

“What, what? How long have you been standing there?”

“Did I just...”

Hyun-ji replies with a blank stare.

“Ah, seriously, you aren’t supposed to just walk into a passionate man’s room with a computer like that. First, you should knock and then close your eyes shut when you come in!”

“But did I just see a million...”

“Yeah right, a million where?”

“That, a million on your smartphone...”

“This? Nah, hahaha. It’s game money. While this oppa of yours was studying for the civil exam, I became not the master civil servant but a master of online poker.”

“But it said Citizens Bank on it...”

“You saw wrong. Come one, thanks for the snacks. Give it to me and hurry on out. Hwi, hwi (shoo shoo).”

Then, Hyun-ji’s brain that had been far flung off in Andromeda, returns.

This bitch, she raises her eyes sharp at me and talks.

“Do you take me for some idiot that can’t recognize a mobile banking screen?”

“...”

“Show it to me. That was 1 million wasn’t it? My eyes aren’t wrong, are they?”

Hyun-ji swiftly takes my smartphone. It’s a maneuver faster than the best jab.

“Oh my gosh... oh my gosh...! It’s really a million bucks. A real million! One, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousand, hundred thousand, a million...! Oh my gosh, oh my gosh!”

“What do you mean oh my gosh? Dear child, this is none of your business.”

“Oppa!”

“What, why?”

“Where did you get this money?”

“...Oppa is doing some business with friends.”

“What? Really?”

“Uh, yeah. With the money I made at part time, my friends and I put it together and invested in a shopping mall. I didn’t want mom and noona to worry about me losing money on a venture capital so I kept it secret.”

Another weird ass story flows forth from my lips.

“Then getting hired at Jinseong Group and the Porsche...”

“No, those are real. I did get hired at Jinseong Group. You saw the contract.”

“Oppa...”

“What?”

Hyun-ji’s eyes, it looks like she is in love.

“I love you, oppa.”

“...”

What did she say?

Chapter 56

Yoo Min-jeong (Part I)

“Are we rich now?”

“What are you doing, trying to sneak in a we?”

“Ah, oppa!”

“Hold up!”

I use the side step I learned from Choi Hyuk to avoid Hyun-ji’s lunge at me. Who would have thought that the effects of training would be used here this way.

“You are assuming incorrectly because this money isn’t my money.”

“Huh? Then what?”

“Company funds! The foundation of a corporate body is funds. So don’t think that this money is my money.”

“Are you sure you didn’t just pull that out of your ass?”

How is she so sharp randomly?

“You think it’s easy becoming a millionaire? With what method would I have just casually made a million bucks?”

“Aw, darn.”

Thankfully, dim-witted Hyun-ji believes what I say. Thank goodness.

“Anyway, what kind of shopping mall is it?”

“Parts, you know, a computer parts shopping mall.”

I almost said fashion. If I had said that, Hyun-ji would definitely have showed interest and spewed some nonsense like asking me to use her as a model.

“Yeah? Does that shopping mall need models?”

...of course. This is Hyun-ji.

“Why would computer parts need a model? We don’t need them.”

“And the shopping mall is doing well?”

“It’s okay, just enough for a little spending money. I don’t have a lot of stake.”

“Then oppa, with the salary you get from working at Jinseong Group and this from the mall, wow! Oppa, you must really make a lot of money.”

“Well, it’s good enough for eating and living.”

“Aw, don’t be modest.”

Hyun-ji is out of the million-dollar shock and returned to her old self and starting with the aegyo again.

There is a reason Hyun-ji is only flattering me like this.

Who is the person that gives an allowance to Hyun-ji? It’s noona, bloodless and tearless, the cold old maid, miss Kim Hyun-joo. No matter how flattering and cute Hyun-ji is to her, there won’t even be any soup.

Compared to that, I am a far easier adversary. When we were young, there are many things I forfeited because I couldn’t stand her constant nagging...

“Oppa, don’t be like that, just tell me. I can tell unni is hiding something, its unsettling.”

“Huh?”

“She’s probably thinking of stopping my allowance once I graduate college.”

She’s good at catching the drift.

“Don’t you think unni was just too mean to me from the get go? I get in trouble for partying out late, and she tells me not to eat your chips.”

Seriously, stop eating my chips!

“She has no love for her younger sister, really. We have such a big age difference, shouldn’t she find me cute and adorable?”

“The fact that you think like that is the problem.”

“Anyway, oppa, give me some money, huh? I’ll be really good to you. You want me to introduce you to some girls? Amongst my school friends, not anyone like Min-jeong who just parties, but there are girls who do well in school and are demure. When you dropped me off in your car, they all begged me to introduce you to them.”

Meh. Even if they do really well in school, if it’s a student from Hyun-ji’s school, I can tell that class without even looking.

“Oh and be careful about Min-jeong. She’s really hitting on you.”

“Me?”

“Yeah, last time I said let’s go to the club and now she said she doesn’t do that anymore.”

“You should stop going too.”

Hyun-ji completely ignore what I say and just continues on with what she has to say.

“She said she’s going to live now as a good girl or something? Oh my gosh, a while ago she even started studying for traditional Korean cooking? She said she’s going to get the western and Chinese ones too!”

“So, what about it? Those are good things.”

“I’m telling you, this is all her wagging her tail at you. She’s past girlfriend, she’s eyeing your wife position.”

“That’s some speculation.”

“Well, just be careful of that foxy bitch.”

“I don’t know. Right now, I’m not interested in girls.”

The problem is whether I’ll live or die, girls are not in the equation.

“...”

“...”

“What, why aren’t you getting out? Are you not done in here?”

At my question, Hyun-ji abruptly sits in my lap.

“Oppa, allowance! Please?”

“Why are you asking me for it? Pretty soon, you’ll be making more than me.”

Hyun-ji looks suspiciously at me and I smile and add.

“Fried chicken.”

“Gyak! Seriously! You’re so dead!”

Hyun-ji blows up.

Hyun-ji actually just lays down on my bed and starts to say she won’t leave until I give her some money.

When I try to shoo her out, she crawls under the blankets like a snail and then barbarically throws off her pants and shirt. I can’t force her out of my room now, I have no options.

“If you don’t give it to me, I’m going to tattle on mom and unni that you are doing business!”

“I lose, I lose.”

I put \$500 into Hyun-ji’s bank account. Hyun-ji verifies it on her mobile banking and then giggles in happiness.

“Oppa, thank you! I love you!”

“Put your clothes back on and get out!”

“Okay!”

Hyun-ji fumbles under the blankets putting her clothes back on and then leaves my room.

After the storm passes, only then do I look again at my mobile banking screen.

One million.

The \$500 I gave to Hyun-ji can’t even be seen.

“Hahaha.”

I laugh.

I think to myself that I can at least set aside enough money for Hyun-ji’s future before I die. Mom and noona will live well on their own but I worry about Hyun-ji.

But then.

Ring.

My smartphone vibrates. A message from Min-jeong.

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Doesn’t it look tasty?]

With that message came a picture of a delicious looking Pollack fish with a red pepper paste sauce.

[Me: oo* it looks so tasty. I heard you studying traditional Korean cooking lately?]

(TN: Korean quick way of texting ‘en’ which means ‘yup’. ㅇ is the actual word)

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: haha did you hear that from Hyun-ji?]

[Me: oo]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Would you like to come over and eat some? I'll show you my skills]

‘Woah.’

Hyun-ji's words were right.

Min-jeong is hitting on me, and maybe she's changed her tactic because she's not being subtle about it anymore.

I can't turn her down directly so I answer in a circle.

[Me: I'm going to Denmark on a business trip and I don't know when I'll be back. I'll call you when I get back though^^]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Denmark?]

[Me: oo for work]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: You're so cool! I want to go to Denmark too @.@]

[Me: keke* anyway, I'll call you when I get back]

(TN: Korean way of laughing)

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: When are you going?]

Oi, I'm pretty sure she knows I just rejected her and she's just ignoring it. She wasn't normally like this, why is she like this now? Is it cause of the Porsche?!

[Me: Wednesday]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: okay! Got it]

The conversation ends like that. I don't know what she's saying she's got, but I have a bad feeling about it.

The next day, a day before going to Denmark, I go to the mountain house again and meet with the chairman and learn some boxing. He says I learned it all too fast so today we're going to train by repeating all the points in sparring. I can properly block so I can much more easily go against Choi Hyuk.

If I was in a boxing square I might have been able to corner Choi Hyuk into a corner and beat him up but there is no ring so it ends in a tie. But I did get beat on less.

“Whew, your whole body is so fit, you’re overpowering me.”

“It’s all thanks to your good teaching.”

“But to think that if you’re beating me you can stop training, that’s wrong. You are still far behind in skills.”

“Of course.”

It’s only been a few days since learning, I would never think that.

“The first problem we have to overcome is in regards to the opponent’s attack, not losing your rhythm. You have to halt your attack with stopping or you have to dodge with weaving, but since you only know blocking, you end up matching your rhythm to the opponent’s attack.”

I nod my head. Then again, when I kept going in with sheer physicality, the general atmosphere of the sparring was from Choi Hyuk.

“Today, let’s do some stopping.”

Stopping is a skill using a fist or arm to halt the opponent’s attack movement while looking for an opportunity to attack.

I spend the day blocking or stopping Choi Hyuk’s offense. I wanted to practice all day but Choi Hyuk got tired too fast (since he’s human) so we couldn’t practice for very long.

I think maybe it’s all pointless, but today I can gauge how much I’ve improved in my fighting skill.

Schwick- bbuk!

“Gwek!”

I use Sylph to scour the mountainside and find a boar to fight against with my boxing.

A sharp punch.

With the proper motions I extend my fist and a sharp punch, and surprisingly, a very powerful gust of wind. I only used the divine protection of wind and it was enough to knock about the boar.

‘It wasn’t weak because the level is low, it was because my form was terrible.’

Of course, I’m sure some of it has to do with it being entry level 1.

When the boar rushes at me, I quickly jab and even have the sense to knock it off its front feet. It is because I learned the importance of using stopping to halt the opponent’s rhythm.

“Divine protection of fire.”

My attack with the wind and flame makes it all the more dangerous.

Kwa lu lung!

As I throw a powerful straight, the formidable sized boar faltered.

Stricken with fear, the boar turned around and raced off and I use that chance to run.

I use the divine protection of wind to leap forward and shorten the distance between us and then I kick the boar in the side.

Buk!

Kwang-!

“Gwek!”

I can feel from my foot the feeling of something shattering inside the boar.

The boar falls over and pants its breath in misery.

‘I’m sorry.’

After I express my condolences I use Sylph to use the wind daggers to finish it off.

'I've definitely grown stronger!'

I gain confidence.

I don't even feel nervous because I was thinking that learning these things now wouldn't have an immediate effect.

But through the boar, I was able to verify that my attacks have improved from before. I am sure of it. If I continue to learn until the end of this rest period, I know I can keep getting stronger.

I didn't realize the time passing by as I put all my energy into practice and the day grows dark and I decide to slowly make my way back home.

'Tomorrow I go to Denmark.'

As for foreign travel, all I ever did was go to Beijing once after I was done in the army.

To think, I'm finally going to Europe, I'm full of excitement. Even more so, it's not just any old plane. It's chairman Park Jin-seong's private jet!

Will the inside of the plane be like a hotel?

I have to hurry and pack my bags so I hurry back home to Cheonan. I've become used to driving and I slowly get immersed in driving my Porsche around everywhere.

For some odd reason, Hyun-ji is home early today but she's not alone.

"Hi, oppa!"

"Hello!"

An energetic greeting from two girls.

One of them is Min-jeong. And the other is the girl that was with them at the club last time. Hyun-ji's club friends have all gathered here.

"Hey 400 pointer, you going out partying again?"

At my question, Hyun-ji's face turns into the biggest frown. Min-jeong and her friend

are laughing hysterically.

“Min-jeong said she’ll make dinner.”

“Dinner?”

Min-jeong shines a bright smile and says.

“Oppa, you said you’re going to Denmark tomorrow. So, I wanted to see you before you left.”

“Oppa, I really wanted to see you. I heard you got a job at a really nice place, that’s so cool! Oppa, I want to ride in your car too.”

What the fuck situation is this.

I just stare head on at Hyun-ji. Hyun-ji just sweats a cold sweat and pretends to be doing something else.

I mean, she kept going on about how I can’t date Min-jeong, but now she’s brought her over to our house?

“Just wait a little bit. The rice is all done.”

Min-jeong heads into the kitchen, singing to herself.

The other friend is asking me how I came to be employed at Jinseong Group, how much is my salary, is the car nice, a continuous barrage of materialistic questions. Ah, disillusionment.

I feel tired and get up from my seat.

“I have to get ready for my business trip tomorrow.”

“Okay, go ahead.”

I go into my room and pack the things I need tomorrow, my passport and clothes, when Hyun-ji sneaks in.

“Oppa~”

“Not long ago, you told me to be careful about Min-jeong.”

“Aw, well you see. Min-jeong and even Ji-hyun were throwing a fit saying they want to come hang out at our house. Ji-hyun was nagging too about how she wanted to see you. And Min-jeong kept insisting she wanted to show me what she learned from cooking school and I couldn’t keep saying no...”

I look at Hyun-ji pathetically, and Hyun-ji hangs her head in shame.

I don’t know anymore.

Whatever happens, will happen.

Chapter 57

Yoo Min-jeong (Part 2)

Bibimbap, shredded daikon, minced meat pancakes, Min-jeong prepares a spread of all the various things she's cooked.

"Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, this is awesome! Did you really make all this?"

"You haven't been learning that long and you're already this good? I can only make ramen."

Hyun-ji and Ji-hyun are amazed.

Well, honestly, it is nothing to be amazed at. It's just interesting because Min-jeong is cooking at all.

Min-jeong looks at me and smiles prettily.

"What do you think? Doesn't it look tasty?"

"Um, yeah. Can we eat it?"

"Of course. Everyone, eat."

"It looks so good."

"Thank you."

It's a so-so meal.

Min-jeong's cooking isn't bad and there are a lot of side dishes that mom had made so it all made for a plentiful meal.

Maybe it is because of my physique. I'm so hungry I eat two bowls.

But Min-jeong sees me get that second bowl of rice from the rice cooker and her eyes

twinkle at me. I feel like she feels like she's being my wife and it makes me sweat in nervousness. Min-jeong is now without reservations, hitting on me.

Hyun-ji and Ji-hyun in no way, didn't notice all this.

A weird atmosphere settles in the air so I change the subject. I will toss you girls a subject you can't ignore.

"Have you all decided where you'll be working?"

Hyun-ji and Ji-hyun flinch.

Surprisingly, Min-jeong remains calm and speaks.

"I've decided to go into the business my relative oppa set up."

I see.

That's how she was able to relax and study cooking during this time.

"I'm so jealous! Can you do anything for me?"

The friend, Ji-hyun, must have a lot of employment problems cause she's clinging to Min-jeong.

"Maybe? I'll ask him but it'll be difficult. It's a small venture company so it doesn't need that many employees. I got lucky because one accounting job became available. The pay isn't much either."

"Aw, what am I going to do? I'm studying for the TOIEC but with this it won't be any help."

"You guys, I'm getting threatened into getting the family fried chicken business!"

Hyun-ji starts to throw a tantrum.

Hmm, this sure brought a result.

I leave the three to chat and head into my room to pack my bag.

I don't have a lot of things to take and I'm able to fit everything into one Boston bag. I get everything organized much easier than I thought I would, so I got my laptop and get on the internet.

He said the Nordic Exam Group headquarters is in Copenhagen, Denmark. I think there might be some time after we finish our business and I can get in some tourism so I decide to research some tourist destinations.

"Oppa, they're leaving."

It's time for Hyun-ji's two friends to return home so I go to say goodbye in the entryway. And then, Min-jeong suddenly asks me.

"Oppa, can you escort me home?"

"Oh, right! Me too! I want to ride in the Porsche!"

Ji-hyun clings on too.

Min-jeong did make dinner so I can't not take her home either.

Hyun-ji finds it all a nuisance and decides to stay home, so I take the two girls to the car to take them home. The two people take in the luxurious interior of the car and are amazed.

I turn over the engine and Min-jeong speaks.

"Ji-hyun's house is closer so let's go there first."

Ji-hyun full on stares at Min-jeong. Min-jeong just taps Ji-hyun's hand. Maybe their stare was an exchanging of a whole story because Ji-hyun just giggles to herself.

"Thank you!"

I drop off Ji-hyun and input into my GPS navigation while I ask Min-jeong.

"Where's your house?"

"Ahnsung blank-blank* efficiency apartment."

(TN: Raws really said blank-blank)

I put in the address she gives me and realize that it's right in front of Hyun-ji's school. It's only ten minutes from our house.

I now realize why Ji-hyun was giggling to herself earlier. Min-jeong told me to drop off Ji-hyun first so that she could be alone with me.

The atmosphere turns weird again.

"Your place is in front of the school?"

"My house is in Seoul but I'm living here alone because the school is in Cheonan."

"..."

That strange feeling I get when she says she lives alone is just probably my own over thinking. I don't really have anything else to say so I just turn the car.

Min-jeong and I both don't say a word. It feels awkward which in turn makes me nervous.

We arrive in front of the efficiency apartment that Min-jeong lives at.

"We're here."

Min-jeong nods her head and gets out the car.

But lo and behold, she opens the passenger car door and sits next to me. Then she just stares at me.

"What, what?"

"Oppa, what are you so afraid of?"

"Huh?"

I felt for sure that question was supposed to catch me off guard. Cause the next second, Min-jeong's lips overtake mine.

After strongly indulging in my lips, she slightly draws back and looks me right in the eyes. We have maybe 10 cm between us? One pair of eyes stare into my soul.

“Oppa, it’s not like you don’t like me.”

I don’t even have a chance to say anything back. Her lips are on top of my lips again.

She touches and pushes and slightly bites and the whole feeling is actually very tender. From her lips to mine, I can feel her sweetness.

She grabs my neck with one hand, and with the other hand she grazes my thigh, all while deliberately kiss attacking me.

The reason the kiss can be so long is because I don’t resist and just innocently receive it all.

I have no idea how much time has passed.

The life suffocating kiss is done.

With a slightly flushed face, Min-jeong looks at me lovingly.

“Remember what I said? That I live alone.”

“ .. ”

“You must be tired. Come in for some coffee.”

I park my car in the efficiency apartment underground parking lot and get dragged by Min-jeong’s hands and go up together.

If I go up, I’m sure a more exhausting situation will happen, but it doesn’t matter. I decide to just not think this through.

As soon as we get to her place we dig into each other.

We kiss and our tongues wrap around each other. Min-jeong takes off my shirt, and I lift her and put her on the bed. While I take off my pants, she takes off her clothes too.

Her seductive pale body in nothing but black lingerie excites me.

I get an excitement like all the blood is rushing to my brain and melting it.

Reason is no longer within my head.



Underneath the bed, two people's clothes are messily strewn about.

Min-jeong is tucked cutely underneath the sheets and she smiled wryly as she touched my body. With a delicate touch, she stroked my chest and my abs.

I want to get under the sheets with her, but with Min-jeong's firm request to see my body, I have to remain under the light, baring my body.

I make the same request and she says she can't because she's embarrassed. I feel a little annoyed by her hiding under the sheets alone, but her cuteness trumps it.

"It must be so hard to get a body like this."

"Well."

"I've never even seen a body this great on TV."

Min-jeong touches my good-to-look-at perfect abs and is intrigued.

I got this body through a karma prize, not through hard work, and it pokes at my integrity a little.

'But now what?'

The revolution is over and so is the regret and slowly, reason returns to me.

I am but a man and when Min-jeong came onto me without abandon, I didn't say no, I just let it all happen.

But now I'm trying to figure out how to correct our relationship.

"Min-jeong."

"Yes, Min-jeong is here."

She says as she gets snuggled up to me. Who would say she isn't friends with Hyun-ji, because she too has a plethora of aegyo.

"Do you sincerely like me?"

"Yes, I do."

"Why?"

"Good car, good job, good body, good personality."

"..."

It's such a blunt response I temporarily am at a loss for words, but Min-jeong just looks at me and laughs.

"I'm joking."

"I don't think it was all a joke."

Min-jeong giggles.

"That's not all."

"Then?"

"That night, I saw it all. You and those men."

That second, my body becomes rigid with tension.

"You saw?"

"Yeah. I was worried for you so I stayed back and watched. I was going to call the police if they hurt you. I couldn't hear, but those people, they were from Jinseong Group, right?"

"Yeah."

"The chairman was saying something and you just downright refused."

“I did.”

“After I saw that, I went head over heels for you.”

“Because those people were from Jinseong Group?”

“Nothing like that.”

“Then what?”

“I got the feeling you were a person doing something important. That’s when I fell for you. I could only think of you and all other guys just felt so trivial.”

“...”

“I can’t tell you I’ve lived my life modestly but that doesn’t mean I started hitting on you with a light heart.”

“...I don’t like party girls.”

“I don’t party anymore. After I graduate and start working, I can’t be a kid like that anymore.”

If only Hyun-ji would think like this too.

“I can’t promise you anything.”

“You don’t have to promise me anything. I just like you, oppa.”

I look at Min-jeong.

Unlike her usual playful and foxy self, she’s sincere.

I don’t know.

I don’t know when I’ll die, and I’m interested in Min-jeong but I don’t really like her in that way. It might be a relationship that who knows, when it will end.

But still, if she wants it, that’s not bad either.

It's a little selfish, but living a life where I don't know when it will end, having a girl I can meet would be nice. She's pretty and takes care of herself (dresses well) and has aegyo, Min-jeong is plenty worthy.

I grab the blanket that is hiding Min-jeong. And she in turn grabs it tight when she says.

"If you don't answer, I won't let you anymore."

Instead of an answer, I give her a kiss.

"Okay, let's date. I don't know how this will go, but let's try."

At my words, Min-jeong smiles.

"Oppa, it'll probably last a lot longer than you think. Didn't I mention it before?"

She takes the sheets off.

A gorgeous woman lies before me and she continues.

"Missing me so much you'll go crazy, stepping on eggshells in case I'm mad, getting ecstatic when I do something small."

She grabs my head with both hands and guides it to her cushiony breasts.

"That's how all men who date me end up. There's no point in anything else."



When I get back home, it's 2 am.

Neither mom or noona care that I was out so late. Because I'm not Hyun-ji.

I go into my room and play a game on my smartphone when Hyun-ji comes in with glaring goblin eyes.

"What were you doing out so late?"

"I was exercising."

“Oh ho, exercise? Yeah, I’m sure you sweat a ton.”

At Hyun-ji’s sarcasm, I flinch.

‘Does she know?’

But of course. Hyun-ji shows me her smartphone screen.

[Min-jeong: hey, sister in law~ I’ll be really good~ >v<]

“I told you so many times and finally, you got reeled in by that fox, and now you’ve “exercised” together, have you? Was it good?”

“Uh haha! Dear child, let’s not exchange uncomfortable talk between siblings.”

“Wow, so you did do something that would be uncomfortable to talk about between siblings? Good for you!”

Dis bitch?

The day has finally come when I’m getting scolded from Hyun-ji.

“Now do you know how I felt when I went looking for you at that club? What? Your hand couldn’t let go? You must’ve had a lot of fun with that dick!”

“Why are you bringing that up again!”

We bicker and argue at and that and at the fuss, mom wakes up and with one eye open, pokes her head into my room.

“Why are you guys fighting at this hour?”

“Mom! Oh my gosh...!”

“What!”

Hyun-ji babbles on with every little detail and tattles on me to mom.

After hearing it all, mom looks at me, then approaches me and puts her hand on my shoulder.

“Son, good job.”

“No need.”

“What do you mean, good job!”

Mom explains to Hyun-ji who is in a fit.

“Hyun-ji, I don’t care how, but I’m happy for it. No matter what accident your brother has, if he gets me a grandchild in my arms, I don’t care.”

“ .. ”

“ .. ”

At mom’s declaration, we both are at a loss for words

Chapter 58

Copenhagen (Part 1)

I received contact from chairman Park Jin-seong to get to Gimpo airport by 11 am.

Thanks to that I have some time left over in my morning and I take Hyun-ji to school.

“Oppa!”

As soon as I stop the car and drop her off, there’s a girl that opens my passenger door and sits herself down in its seat.

With long black hair and impressionable double eyelids, a happy 23-year old college student (in American age, this is 22.)

It’s the girl that I started dating yesterday, Yoo Min-Jeong.

“You’re going to Denmark today, right? Aww, what will I do, I won’t be able to see you for a while?”

Seeing the adorable Min-Jeong, I am reminded of the sweet time we had last night and my heart is happy.

“I see you’re both just getting along so well!”

Finding all this ridiculous, Hyun-ji looked at us, at her wit’s end. Whether she stares or not, Min-Jeong brazenly sticks herself closer to me. Hyun-ji looks like she’s about to rage.

“I don’t know when I’ll be back. When I get back, I’ll call you first.”

“You won’t go cheat or anything?”

“Of course not. I don’t even have the skills to do that.”

“Okay, you can’t get all excited that you’re in Europe and go have a fling with some

blonde, okay?"

"Don't worry, I don't like blondes."

"Then?"

Instead of an answer, I stroke back Min-Jeong's hair. Min-Jeong smiled and got even closer to me.

"You'll be late for class, bitch!"

Maybe it hurt her eyes to see us, because Hyun-ji is annoyed to the max. But instead, Min-Jeong just closes the door. Then she opens her window and speaks.

"I'm going to skip morning classes, sub in for me!"

"What?"

"Please and thank you, sister-in-law! Okay, oppa, let's go! Hurry, hurry!"

I do as I'm told and start the car. I can see Hyun-ji throwing a fit through my rear view mirror. Min-Jeong is giggling next to me. I laugh too.

"Oppa, what should we do?"

I take out my smartphone and check the time. It's not 9am.

"Did you eat breakfast?"

"No. I have lectures starting at 9 am and I woke up late today."

"Then let's go eat something tasty. Know anywhere good?"

"There's a pasta shop in front of school."

"Okay, we'll go there."

We go to the shopping district in front of the school and park on the street and get out.

The gaze of passing students rests on me as I get out of the driver seat. It is the power

of the Porsche Cayenne. It's not a flashy sports car, but still, it's rare to see in front of a college.

Min-Jeong quickly got out of the car and stands right next to me.

It's an action like she's marking me as hers.

The passing students look super annoyed by it. The poor students that have received mental damage early in the morning move on by at a faster pace.

"Keep doing that and you'll be an outcast."

"Doesn't matter. I'm graduating soon anyway."

She's so bright like she's on drugs and her good mood rubs off on me and makes me feel good too.

We eat together when Min-Jeong suddenly grabbed my wrist and speaks.

"Oppa, do you not have a watch?"

"Yeah."

"A working man should have a wrist watch."

"Really? I guess I should buy one."

Actually, I have a beat up digital watch I used in the army at home. They were being sold for \$10 in front of the army base but I don't wear them because I don't like how it looks.

"Oppa, can I get you one as a present?"

"It's okay. Since I'm going abroad, I'll get one at an airport shop."

I have a million dollars in my bank. There's no need to use an almost-graduated college girl's budget.

"How expensive are you going to get?"

“Hmm, I don’t know. I have enough money so I’ll take a big bite and get a good one.”

“Give me a figure. I’ll pick it out for you!”

“You will?”

“Yeah, I’ll search online and pick a few and message the options to you.”

“Hmm, well.”

“No?”

Min-Jeong makes a cute expression. Her eyes are dewy like the eyes of a bunny rabbit. I have no doubt that she knows her double eyelids are beautiful.

‘Makes me wonder. How much do I say?’

Tens of thousands of dollars wouldn’t be a burden at all. But if I name a number that high she might faint and find it strange. But I have all this money and I don’t want a cheap one either...

“\$5000?” (USD)

“Really?”

“Yeah, I’ll wear it forever so I should go big.”

“Am I picking out something that will be wrapped on your wrist forever?”

“Exactly. So you have to pick well.”

“Hehe, just leave it to me.”

Shopping is definitely for girls, because Min-Jeong’s eyes glow with determination.

We finished our meal and drink some coffee at the café next door and chit chat about this and that. Min-Jeong has an endless list of things to talk about and she never stops talking.

It’s time for us to part so we get in the car and I take her back to school when Min-

Jeong suddenly says,

“Oppa, tell me one wish of yours.”

“A wish?”

“Whatever it is, I’ll grant one wish.”

“You really, mean, like, whatever?”

“Yes, in the spirit of wishing you a good trip. Threes also the meaning of not having you cheat while you’re over there.”

“Psh, cheating. Anyway, a wish...”

Wish.

She’ll grant it no matter what it is.

A bunch of dirty thoughts dance across my mind. Due to Min-Jeong’s provocative stare, even more lustful thoughts abound. And we are right in front of the school which means her efficiency apartment is right nearby.

‘No, no, I shouldn’t.’

I control my desperate urges. We had relations on the day we decided to date. The pace is already fast enough and if we do it again here, I feel like I’ll be pushing too much with Min-Jeong.

“Give me a kiss.”

“Pft, scaredy-cat.”

That upsets me.

“Should I change my wish now then?”

“You can’t.”

Min-Jeong giggled as she approaches me for a kiss. We meet our lips together and

share a breath and affectionately caress each other's tongues. My body warms up and Min-Jeong and I both, with a little disappointment, part.

"I'm going to head back to class now. I think Hyun-ji's going to be mad."

"Okay, I'll see you when I get back."

"Let's chat on video chats."

"Okay."

Min-Jeong goes into her school and I head back home. I changed my clothes and grab my Boston bag stuffed with my things and head in the direction of Gimpo airport.



Speaking of, Gimpo airport is in a full ruckus.

"Chairman, what is your reason for going abroad to Denmark?"

"Are you planning on returning to work?"

"Is it true you have a health problem?"

"Chairman!"

"Chairman! An answer, please...!"

The reporters are bustling like a swarm of ants with a flurry of questions. The flash goes off from all different directions, all aimed at chairman Park Jin-seong's face.

The guards blocked off the reporters that keep swarming in like bees and forge a path.

With the path that they barely carved out, chairman Park Jin-seong calmly walked through. Next to him is the 3rd office secretary Lee Jung-shik and me too.

Being next to chairman Park Jin-seong, my face will probably end up in the papers too.

'Mom, I think I'll be on the 9 o'clock news.'

Like it'll only be on the news.

At this rate, my face will be on the front pages of newspapers.

When I get on chairman Park Jin-seong's personal use Boeing 737, I don't even have the time to take in the grand interior that I can't even believe is the inside of a plane, before I collapse into the nearest chair.

I sat on a sofa in front of a coffee table and lean my body back.

The first attack of reporters I've ever experienced in my life was a shock.

They were questions for chairman Park Jin-seong, but just by standing next to him, I was more nervous. I feel as if I was group lynched.

'He's lived his life being subjected to this kind of thing.'

I admire chairman Park Jin-seong for having held a straight face, without changing, in front of all those reporters.

I was briefly able to experience what a huge pressure it is to have any interest from others.

Chairman Park Jin-seong looks exhausted from it too.

He sat on the sofa across from me and extended his hand to me.

"Whew, I am exhausted. Give me one of those."

It is obvious what 'one of those' things chairman Park Jin-seong is referring to.

"Yes."

I make a flame of life and hand it to him. Chairman Park Jin-seong swallowed the flame in one gulp and it must give him a surge of energy because he smiled happily.

"This is why I didn't ask for it when I saw you this morning. It's more dramatic to eat it after the bustle."

"Haha..."

“Ugh, I am so thirsty. Go bring something to drink.”

As soon as chairman Park Jin-seong flicked his finger, a stewardess quickly fetches him some orange juice.

She’s maybe late 20’s?

With a tidy appearance and cute impression, the stewardess asked me.

“Can I get you anything to drink?”

“Yes, coffee please.”

“What kind of coffee should I get you?”

“An iced Americano.”

“Okay, please wait one moment.”

The stewardess quickly got me an iced Americano. I am moved by this experience as I drink my coffee.

‘How could the inside of a plane be this comfortable.’

Before I came, I searched for ‘Jinseong Group chairman private jet’ online.

‘It said there are sleeping quarters and an office obviously and even a gym.’

I really want to take a look around.

But more importantly than that, I should change into more comfortable clothes. The suit I am wearing right now is indeed uncomfortable.

“Chairman, is it okay if I change?”

“Do what you want. But...”

Chairman Park Jin-seong looks me up and down.

“Why are you wearing such a cheap suit? You’ve got loads of money now.”

“I don’t really have an interest in clothes.”

“You don’t have a watch on your wrist, your hairstyle is that, you’re a young guy, why not care about how you look?”

“Is it that weird?”

Receiving this scolding, I scratched my head.

Chairman Park Jin-seong spoke.

“You are going to meet people for official business. Do you want to look unimportant to these people?”

“Um, no.”

“Not only that but you are only a 3rd turn examinee so to them, you will look all the more pitiful, so if you look like you do now, that will only make it worse. When we get to Copenhagen, go shopping first.”

“Okay, I will.”

“Also, you can’t speak English?”

“No...”

“Ugh!”

Chairman Park Jin-seong grabbed the back of his neck.

“Oh goodness, sometimes when I see you, I get angry. When I was your age, I lived and worked so hard...!”

“I’m sorry. Please calm down.”

“You are as the saying goes, disease giving, cure giving.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong once again flicked his fingers and called over the stewardess.

“Yes?”

The stewardess from before approached.

“Young lady, what is your name?”

“It is Lee Soo-hyun, chairman.”

“Take this fellow shopping in Copenhagen. Starting with hairstyle, from head to toe, fix him up, got it?”

Stewardess Lee Soo-hyun looks me up and down.

In embarrassment, I hang my head low. Perhaps Lee Soo-hyun finds me doing this to be funny because she smiles and says.

“Understood, chairman.”

Having been pegged as a fool, I mumbled to myself in my head and changed into more comfortable clothes. Jeans and a t shirt, a cardigan, a blazer, and sneakers is what I changed into and he must not like it very much because chairman Park Jin-seong tsk tsk his tongue.

‘Oh like you dress all that well... damn, that watch looks nice.’

I looked at his shiny wristwatch and am back to admiring him.



After about 12 hours in flight, we arrive at the Copenhagen airport. Current time zone time is 4 in the afternoon.

Chairman Park Jin-seong moved separately so he could be seen for foreign business reasons.

I was left alone at the airport like a missing child and I felt anxious when stewardess Lee soo-hyun came to escort me.

“Come this way.”

“Okay.”

I tagged along behind Lee Soo-hyun like a baby chick.

Lee Soo-hyun took me outside the airport and we got into a cab. The middle aged taxi driver and her conversation, I understood none of it.

I looked out the window as we rode in the taxi and I blankly stared at the strange landscape and the strange people.

Copenhagen.

My first step onto European soil.

Chapter 59

Copenhagen (Part 2)

We drove for about 20 minutes in the taxi and we arrived at a street in the center of Copenhagen.

“This is Stroget.”

Stewardess Lee Soo-hyun kindly explained this place to me.

Being the longest pedestrian street in Europe, it is also the center of shopping in Copenhagen. The word stroget itself means ‘to walk’ in Danish.

It is strewn with old buildings and the whole street looks ancient. I felt as if I could be delusional that I am in the 1800’s.

I followed Lee Soo-hyun around and started touring and shopping.

Lee Soo-hyun began to do as she was instructed, changing me from head to toe.

She searched for a hair salon on her phone and we start by getting me a fresh haircut and then she dragged me around to brand name stores where I get a two button suit and a shirt and dress shoes. I end up holding a bunch of bags in both hands full of plain clothes too.

Suddenly I get a text on my roaming cell phone.

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Oppa! I picked one. I picked a relatively lower price one that is really sturdy. I couldn’t pull the trigger on such a large purchase so I couldn’t get a really expensive one. ㄸㄸ]

In the picture that Min-jeong has sent me is a \$1000 Swiss brand wrist watch. It’s definitely a brand known for its strength.

‘That’s unexpected.

I smile.

I thought she would be excited and buy an expensive luxury brand, but she does have economic taste.

I send her a response.

[Me: Okay, I'm on my way to go buy it now!]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Buy it and send me a picture]

[Me: Mm]

Perhaps it is the alley of shopping because that watch brand is also nearby. Of course, I buy the watch with my own money.

Thinking of, the price of all the clothes we just bought must be a handful.

“Is the chairman buying all of these things for me?”

“Yes, it is not my card so do not worry.”

Lee Soo-hyun said that and smiled. She's not as cute as Min-jeong, but still a cute girl.

The luxury brand suit is definitely different, just by wearing it. I used to think suits were supposed to be uncomfortable, but now, wearing a suit that is tailored to my body, it is more comfortable than anything.

‘This is me!’

I admired the reflection of me in the full body mirror.

Is it due to the physical strength buff?

Firm shoulders and a fatless midsection, slender waist and long and strong legs are accentuated by the well fitted suit.

Such incredible detail, this moment is the coolest moment of my life.

“You really look completely different.”

I felt that Lee Soo-hyun, too, is admiring me.

“You picked out really good clothes for me. How can I repay you for your hard work?”

“No need. You have such a good body, it was fun.”

The day somehow is gone and now is now 7 pm.

The meeting time is coming up and I have to be on my way.

We came out of the stroget street and got into a taxi and headed towards the hotel.

Lee Soo-hyun checked in at the front desk and handed me a key card. On the card is written NO. 2001. I think it means it's on the 20th floor.

Lee Soo-hyun took me to the restaurant on the hotel basement level 1 and said goodbye.

“If you wait here, the others will arrive here for the meeting.”

“Are you going back?”

“Yes, I checked into this hotel. Well then.”

Lee Soo-hyun then respectfully bowed before disappearing.

‘Ah...’

A little disappointing.

It's not like I have developed feelings for her. I am surrounded in all directions by foreigners speaking a foreign language!

“Hyun-ho Kim?”

Suddenly, a male restaurant employee approached me and asked me.

The employee kept saying something to me.

The employee takes me to a room in the far corner of the restaurant.

He knocks and a young man's voice is heard.

"You may come in."

I'm completely shocked.

It's not Korean.

No, it is a language that does exist in this world. But it the only other language I know.

'It's the Arena's language!'

It's the language they were speaking in the village in the forest. The man in the room is an examinee like me.

I open the door and go in.

"Nice to meet you."

A blonde and handsome man.

I thought to myself that there couldn't be a man more suited to the image of a high born gentleman.

He looked a little bit older than me. Of course, Westerners do look older so I can't judge before he tells me.

"I am examinee Kim Hyun-ho."

"I am Odin."

Odin?

The Odin from the Northern European legends?

"Is that like a code name?"

"Haha, yes. It is also the name I use in the Arena."

"I see. I will call you Odin."

“Sounds good. Anyway, I heard about your predicament from the chairman. You are now but a 3rd turn examinee, a sad situation has befallen you.”

“Yes.”

“Assisting you will be easy and difficult.”

He spoke ambiguously.

I don’t want to be caught in his words.

“When you say easy, you mean is that because I am a 3rd turn examinee, this level will not be difficult to you in your position?”

“Yes. Then what do you think will be the difficult part?”

The baby angel is like this too, there sure are a lot of those who like quizzes.

“It’s probably because you don’t know what kind of exam the 4th exam will be.”

“That’s correct.”

Odin looked proud of my answer and nodded at me.

“But do not despair because of that. I want to help you no matter how.”

Is it because of the price chairman Park Jin-seong will pay him?

I wonder.

The money paid for his aid will be 10 million dollars.

But I somehow get the feeling that to this guy, 10 million bucks isn’t that big a deal.

It’s because I sense his means from his behavior and speech.

Even for carrying the heavy burden of being an examinee, he doesn’t show it at all and exudes an atmosphere of being a magnate/important figure.

“I am an 18th turn examinee.”

18th turn?

That's a surprise.

That means he's lower than Yoo Ji-soo's team that had passed the 19th turn.

Is he not as grand as I assumed him to be?

"And I have never had an instance of failing an exam."

"Ah!"

Then the story is different.

He has never bore the penalty of a failure, and received a prize at every success, he is bound to be a very powerful examinee.

"The place you are at in the Arena is probably the Forest of the Dead and brown mountain border."

"The Forest of the Dead? That forest is the Forest of the Dead?"

"Recently it has been called that. It is said that no one who goes into that forest returns alive. A good and skilled adventurer nor a beast hunting mercenary have ever returned, time and time again, and it has begun to be called that."

Cannot return?

That moment, I recall the silver clan.

"Is it the ranch..."

"Ranch?"

I carelessly mumbled under my breath and it peaks Odin's curiosity.

It's not really anything I have to hide so I tell him what happened in my 3rd turn exam.

Odin's face freezes over.

“Those were really lycanthropes?”

“Yes. They were bastards with silver hair.”

“That is definitely not your average lycanthrope. I can see how the Korean Arena Research Center miscalculated on that one.”

I listened to Odin’s continuing explanation.

“Lycanthropes have the same intellect as human and can even change into human form. Just listening to these points, wouldn’t you say they make a powerful threat against humans?”

“Yes, indeed.”

I agreed.

What if they changed into their human forms and infiltrated human society?

What if they live in the shadows of human society and breed and grow in numbers?

Thinking along these lines, lycanthropes have the biggest chance of being a threat than any other beast or monster.

“But lycanthropes are not as dangerous a monster as we think. Do you know why?”

I thought back to the silver clan leader, Leon.

He pitted us into a mental fight, using a bow and arrow to fight us.

As I thought about Leon Silver, I think I know the answer.

“They reject human culture and adaptations to life and instead favor their bestial instincts? Usually...”

“Haha!”

Odin lets out a refreshing laugh.

“Am I wrong?”

“Not one bit. That is entirely the answer. You are really smart.”

I am relieved.

I am glad that, in the least, I do not appear a useless rookie with no point in helping.

“Anyhow, hearing your story, I can kind of guess what your next exam will be.”

“I am all ears.”

“There is a high chance the exam will be related to the silver clan.”

“...?”

Even though I have already escaped the Forest of Death?

Would I get another exam where I have to go back into the forest and fight the silver clan?

“What was your first exam?”

“It was an exam to kill a red ape.”

“And your second exam?”

“...to survive a week from the red ape clan.”

“That’s usually how it goes. It usually doesn’t end in one exam, but there’s a lot of instances of continuing the exam in the next one. They’re like relations.”

“...?”

“It’s not like meeting someone and then parting means a relationship is over. Exams are the same.”

Relationships... He is a Caucasian who knows the Asian culture well.

“Then the story is simple. You don’t know what the 4th exam will be but I will give you two kinds of aid.”

“Please continue.”

“First, I will send the army to suppress the silver clan.”

“...What?”

Army?

Did I just hear that wrong?

Odin just smiles.

“I will confess that my introduction was inadequate. I am Count Hans Odin.”

‘A count!’

I am in shock and my mouth gapes open.

Impressively, Odin has attained royalty status in the Arena. He has attained the noble title of count and people and things to govern.

Then I recall the ‘ranch’ again.

“I am sorry but the person who raised the high taxes there...”

“Oh, goodness no.”

Odin raises his hand and adamantly shook it.

“That is the story of a neighboring domain’s Bastian. I do not do disgraceful things like that.

“I apologize.”

“No need. Amongst examinees, there are plenty of those bastards that treat the Arena people as mere bugs.”

That hits me in a delicate spot.

In order to clear my exam, there was that time I sacrificed the whole village people as

bait.

“There are evil shit people who kill people and retrieve majeong from those lives. It’s particularly bad in China. They’re crazy for money.”

“Um, people have majeong too?”

I am startled and ask.

Odin spoke.

“Of course they do. People are one of many living creatures that carry a lot of mana. That mana clumps together and therefore they have majeong.”

Odin is enraged as he made a passionate speech.

“China’s country level next generation energy source majeong accrue ment pushes for it they encouraged their arena examinees to kill people and get more majeong.

“The Chinese people are making a mistake. Right now they are doing shit like that and gathering a lot of majeong, but eventually they are taking strong examinees and turning and growing them into murderers.”

They do that?

I get a terrifying feeling.

Using karma prizes to get stronger powers, an examinee murdering and that becoming normal, all in order for profit, how will that end up?

“Our conversation got distracted. So, I will send an army and suppress the lycanthropes.”

“Thank you.”

“And the other thing, it will be good to present to you with a useful gift.”

Chapter 60

Copenhagen (Part 3)

“Equip.”

As he does so, a very thin and black glove appears on his hand.

He takes it off and hands it to me.

“It should prove useful.”

He’s giving it to me so I don’t hesitate to take it.

I touch it and it feels strange. Its soft like silk but also feels strong like metal.

Even so, it has a strange feeling of sticking to my skin too.

“It is a glove weaved from the web of Arachne.”

“Arachne?”

I think I’ve seen it in the illustrated guide from the Korean arena research center. A gigantic beastly spider.

“It is a glove made by processing magic to mitigate the sticky viscosity of the web. Because it was made with magic it is expensive but it is good enough to withstand knife cuts.

“Ah...”

“It’s good for bare handed fighting and also for holding weapons. It does have a unique viscosity so whatever you are holding in your hand won’t easily be let go.”

I listen to his explanation and scan the gloves.

“For the item explanation, you can look on the board.”

Odin makes the suggestion.

Like he said, I retrieve my board and say the following.

“Explain this glove to me.”

Then the words on the board wiggle and change.

-Arachne’s Glove: it is a glove made with magic and sewn from Arachne’s web. It protects the hand with strong durability. It is weak to fire and aura.

Having been learning boxing, this item is very beneficial to me. How much would this item cost in karma?

“Thank you.”

“This may be sufficient enough but who knows. You may receive an exam that is different from my prediction of it being related to lycanthropes.”

“What should I do then?”

“It doesn’t matter if you fail so survive no matter what.”

Odin speaks firmly.

“If you survive, I will help you with your failed mission in the fifth exam. You can get the same exam you’ve failed at before so the second time around I will be of more help to you.”

“Um, can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

“Why are you helping me?”

There is of course, the 10 million dollars that chairman Park Jin-seong is offering.

But no matter how I look at it, Odin doesn’t seem the kind of man that would act for 10 million.

With an identity as an examinee that has also become a lord in the arena.

With skills like that, regardless of which country's agency he affiliates with, he could probably make that.

"Why do you think?"

"..."

Odin gives me yet another quiz question.

'Fine, if you want a quiz, I'll answer.'

I think it over carefully.

He has received a request from chairman Park Jin-seong.

Chairman Park Jin-seong is probably sponsoring and supporting and building relationships with not only the Nordic exam time, but also the Korean Arena research center and other national agencies. He is that invested in curing his disease.

Is it because as a sponsor, he cannot refuse chairman Park Jin-seong's request?

'No, that isn't it.'

With an examinee as great as Odin, even against the great chairman Park Jin-seong, the power dynamic is changed.

Because the one in greater need then would be chairman Park Jin-seong.

Odin doesn't need chairman Park Jin-seong's best bargaining tool, money.

'Then...'

As I keep thinking about chairman Park Jin-seong, one answer comes to mind.

"I'm sorry, do you have someone in your family who is ill?"

Odin smiles.

“Mr. Hyun-ho Kim, I do think our continued relationship will be a good one. And I wish for that too.”

I realize I answered correctly.

“Isn’t it funny?”

“What do you mean?”

“A different world, an angel, exams, karma, everything is unrealistic, but for examinees like us or chairman Park Jin-seong who isn’t an examinee, and even... my daughter who is still so young, it all boils down to the desire to live, and that is the only logic of all worlds.”

“Your daughter...”

“It is not serious yet. But it is the same thing that first took my wife from this world.”

“...”

It must be a genetic disease. I don’t dig for more and Odin spares his words on it.

Odin gives me a phone number.

“Call when you need it.”

“I will.”

And with that we part ways.

I take the elevator and head up to the 20th floor.

When I reach the hallway, I am surprised.

There are only four doors that I can see. Even though this is a very large hotel that should have lots of rooms every floor.

Could it be?

I use my key card and open the door and go inside.

...I see the expansive interior of a suite.

Chairman Park Jin-seong has booked me a suite as my lodgings.

I'm sure someone below him made the arrangements but it means he regards me as this important.

I have a wonderful view of Copenhagen that I can see stretching below my terrace where there is a pretty tea table set up.

I put away in the closet the clothes that I bought earlier from shopping with lee soo-hyun, and I take out comfortable training gear from my Boston bag and change into them.

I am about to put away the suit when I feel something in the inside pocket.

I put my hand in and there is a small and delicately folded piece of paper.

Written in a water based pen, is a pretty and feminine handwriting.

[Lee Soo-hyung 010-****-****]

‘Woah.’

What the!

That famous, legendary, what I thought would never occur in my life...

‘Did I just get hit on? By the personal flight attendant?’

I think about Lee soo-hyun.

Stewardess to the Jinseong Group chairman's private jet. When we were shopping she had good taste in luxury and she is a capable person, having mastered many languages.

I got hit on by a woman like that! Never did I think in my 29 years of life this would happen!

I am moved greatly by this and take a picture with my smartphone camera and

message it to Min-jeong. Proof shot!

[Me; this is how great oppa is.]

The response is immediate.

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: (angry emoticon) What is this! That bitch!]

With the angry emoticon and her furious reaction, Min-jeong is so cute.

I laugh and continue to text her.

[Me: Ah, a lonely night in Copenhagen. I'm so lonely, I think I will fall to seduction]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: No! Don't be seduced ㄸㄸ]

[Me: Then appeal to me with your charms so I'm not shaken. I'm waiting^^]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Just one sec!]

Then Min-jeong sends me a cute selfie. Her smiling face is cute, but this isn't sufficient.

[Me: this is all?]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: aren't I cute?]

[Me: you thought cute would be enough...]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: -_-^ Hold on]

From then on, Min-jeong sends me selfies, each time, with one item of clothing removed.

'Woah!'

Lastly, an excellent picture arrives. She must be feeling shy about it herself because she has her face about half covered with her hand.

Just looking at it makes me dizzy so much I may get a nosebleed.

I'm deeply immersed in the picture when Min-jeong shoots me another text.

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: I'm going to tattle on you to Hyun-ji ㄸㄸ]

[Me: Crap -_-]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: I am so ashamed I can no longer live as a woman]

[Me: Why are you like this all of a sudden -_-]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: I'm going to tell her you threatened me and forced me to take erotic pictures]

[Me: Don't do that! What is it you want?]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: You send the same pictures too, oppa]

[Me:...]

Darn, I had forgotten what kind of woman my adversary is.

That night, I go through some unsettling (?)* times.

(TN: Raws actually has (?) written.)



-Oppa, wake up. It's 7 am.

At the sound of Min-jeong's voice, I barely wake up.

Through the curtains and open window, warm sunlight bathes me.

On my charging smartphone placed on the nightstand next to the bed, I can see Min-jeong's face.

-Oppa~ good morning

Min-jeong's face is happy and bright and smiling.

‘Oh, right.’

Min-jeong said she wanted to monitor me whilst I sleep so we used the Wi-Fi to while I slept with the video chat on.

She did it in case I went cheating on her with Lee Soo-hyun.

“Yeah, good morning, what are you doing?”

-I was just watching your sleeping face.

“For seven hours?”

-Yep, aren’t I devoted?

“...”

-Haha, I was studying.

“Studying?”

-For cooking. I’m going to make you lots of yummy things.

How is it she just says all the right things.

“I thought you were just cosplaying being a nice girl, but you’re really trying hard.”

At the mention of cosplay, Min-jeong laughs.

-I did start it to look good to you, but it turns out it’s really fun.

“You’ll be a good wife.”

-You want to take me?

“Woah now, I don’t know yet. I’m an expensive man.”

-Hmph.

Min-jeong pouts out her lip.

“But I will bring you presents. Is there anything you want?”

As I say so, Min-jeong’s face brightens up.

-There is!

“What?”

-A really good kitchen knife set please.

“Kitchen knives?”

-Kitchen knives are really expensive. But it really does make a difference, a good one versus a bad one.

“...Min-jeong.”

-Yes?

“Stop pretending to be modest and speak honestly. Do you want a bag?”

Min-jeong laughs hysterically.

But she insists on the kitchen knife set to the end.

I can’t tell if she’s actually changed into a modest woman or still acting to appeal to me.

I finish the video chat and call chairman Park Jin-seong.

-Are you done with all your business? Shall we head back then?

“What? Please, give me some time for the touristy stuff. I did come all the way to Copenhagen after all.”

-What’s there to see in Copenhagen? Just go to Spain later instead.

“I have to give you the flame of life every day, how will I go to Spain?”

-Oh, right, there’s that. Fine, then I’ll see you at 8 in front of the hotel.

“You’re going to let me tour?”

-Alright, I’ll show you one important spot in Copenhagen before we head back.

“...okay.”

I adequately shower and change into the clothes I bought yesterday and head downstairs.

It turns to 8 am and right on the dot, chairman Park Jin-seong appears.

He comes with a couple of his guards and nods to me.

“Let’s go.”

“Yes.”

“Only a bumpkin would be a tourist in Copenhagen.”

“ .. ”

We take the car and get off in the city and walk to our destination. On our walk we see the Copenhagen royal palace, Churchill park, and the fishing ports.

And then we finally arrive at our destination.

The place we get to is the symbol of Copenhagen, the representative tourist destination that alone, draws many tourists, just for this.

The mermaid bronze statue.

The statue of the mermaid sitting atop a boulder moves a lot of tourists... is what I think I’ve read on a blog somewhere.

“What is this?”

“What do you mean?”

There is a crowd of tourists taking pictures but in their center is just the one solitary statue of a bronze mermaid.

“All these people are here for this?”

“Yes, this is the symbol of Copenhagen. Not much to see.”

“..”

“Alright, done? Let’s go now. I’m a busy man.”

‘I thought you said you don’t work and have so much free time?’

...but those words don’t come out my mouth.

I feel defeated and effortlessly follow behind chairman Park Jin-seong.

But the park is beautiful, like a fairy tale.

The car quickly arrives and we head to the Copenhagen airport.

I buy a luxury knife set from the duty free shop and board the plane.

There were so many reporters in Korea, but here, there is no crowd to bother chairman Park Jin-seong.

“Did the talk go well?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think you will be okay for your next exam?”

“I don’t know.”

“What is that? Speak definitively. What else can I do?”

“There is nothing more you can do at this point. It is all up to me now. Do not worry. I feel okay.”

Chapter 61

The Fourth Exam Part I

Choi Hyuk's fast combination continued.

I move both my hands like a flash of lightning.

Pa pa pat!

I blocked by stopping all of Choi Hyuk's fast punches.

Lastly, Choi Hyuk's right hook comes in which I dodged with weaving and retaliate with a short upper cut.

Tuk.

The upper cut slightly grazes Choi Hyuk's chin. If it had properly landed, I am positive it would have downed him.

Choi Hyuk shook his head back and forth.

"You are incredible. There is now nothing left for me to teach you."

"You are too kind."

Today is the last of the 20 days of rest I have been given.

Without hitting him, I overpower Choi Hyuk.

Using his well mastered technique, Choi Hyuk used fast speed to impressively do a combination, and he was able to either dodge or block everything.

Have my skills improved over this time? Yes.

But have my boxing skills surpassed Choi Hyuk's? That would be incorrect.

My technique is similar to a baby that has barely begun to walk, incapable of following Choi Hyuk.

But during this time, with the entry level 2 athleticism, lots of boxing moves have become embedded to my body and more than anything, the entry level 5 physical strength buff and newfound reflexes and reactions have really shown their light.

The reactiveness and reflexes are overwhelming.

With the athleticism, the accurate movements were memorized by my body and therefore I could react better.

With such advantages on my part, no matter how skilled and talented Choi Hyuk is, there is nothing he could do.

“There are still many things for you to learn but because I am losing so single handedly, it is embarrassing for me to teach you.”

“Don’t be. This is all thanks to your good teaching, please continue.”

“Yes, it would be good to see you again here, tomorrow.”

“...I will come back.”

It has just passed lunch.

I decided to go home early.

While I drove home in the Porsche cayenne, I gave Min-jeong a call.

Perhaps it is a man’s selfish desires.

As I think about how this could be my last day, I wanted to see Min-jeong.

I wanted to spend time with her.

No, I wanted to hug her.

-Hello?

“Hi, Min-jeong.”

-Hi, oppa!

“I got to go home early today, you want to go out for dinner?”

-Oh no! I already have plans to meet a friend.

“Hyun-ji?”

-No, they’re friends from cooking school.

“Really?”

-They’re really skilled, they help me out a lot. I told them I’d buy them dinner as thank you.

“...well, that’s too bad then.”

-Aw, I’m so sorry. I’ll see you tomorrow. We’ll have a good day tomorrow.

I smile gloomily.

“Okay, let’s do that.”

-I’m sorry.

“That’s okay.”

I end the call and an emptiness creeps in.

How could I feel so alone?

It’s definitely not because Min-jeong can’t hang out today. It’s not like today is the weekend, and it’s a good thing that Min-jeong carries on a life of her own.

I can’t see her just whenever I want.

When I get home, like always, my family will be there. Other than having to take the exam, today is no different than any other normal day.

I am not the unemployed part time guy who would return home to the tiny one room basement anymore.

And yet, I feel this alone.

The three people who have died before me, their faces flit across my brain.

‘So that’s it.’

It’s because I have no people in life and death.

As examinees, feeling the anxiety and fear together, overcoming that together with comrades, I don’t have that anymore.

No one can share in my fear.

I have to fight alone.

A lonely fight...

And now, without anyone by my side, I have to go again to that place.

I arrived at home.

It is like it always is.

Mom and noona are out at work and will come home late, and even though Hyun-ji only has morning classes today, she still hasn’t come home yet and has probably wandered off doing something.

‘Should I prepare early?’

I still have ten hours left.

But I don’t particularly have anything to do so I just decide to prepare for the exam.

I take out the battle suit I got from the Korean Arena research center, cargo pants and tracking shoes, and I pick out other clothes suited well for the wild.

I take out the 7.62 mm bullets box that I had hidden in the corner of my closet.

I retrieve my item bag and tuck in the bullet clip. I also put in a water bottle filled with fresh water and an all-purpose knife.

But then.

Ring- ring-

The smartphone vibrates.

It is Min-jeong.

‘I wonder what this is?’

I am drenched in my solitude and received Min-jeong’s call happily.

“Hello?”

-Oppa!

“Hi, Min-jeong.”

-I cancelled my plans.

“What?”

-I want to see you today.

“Why? We can see each other tomorrow...”

I asked in a slightly shaking voice. Min-jeong speaks.

-Oppa, your voice kind of sounded lonely, is there something wrong? I got worried, so I want to see you today.

Boom, a warm fuzzy feeling hits my chest.

This is the Min-jeong I decided to date without much thought.

If I don’t survive past the 4th exam, today will be the end for me. But regardless of that fact, my heart feels light...

And at this moment right now, I am so immensely thankful to Min-jeong.

I felt a hot emotion just at the fact that she recognized my solitude, having to go soon to fight to the death.

“And tomorrow?”

-I'll see you tomorrow too, hehe.

I break into a smile.

“Okay. We'll see each other today and see each other tomorrow too. Where are you right now?”

-I'm at cooking school.

I had been there a couple days before.

“I'll head over.”

-Really?

“Yep, wait for me.”

I haphazardly shoved the items I had packed up back under the bed and left the house.

Due to how much I wanted to see her, my speed matched my haste.

I arrived in front of the cooking school and I sent her a text to come out.

“Oppa!”

Min-jeong raced towards me with an anticipatory and excited expression.

I get out of the driver's seat and grabbed Min-jeong and hugged her tight.

“Woah, oppa! People will see.”

“Who sees.”

“The friends I mentioned earlier.”

“Huh?”

Only then do I see the friends that came running out following Min-jeong.

The two girls about the same age as Min-jeong look surprised at our public display of affection.

“Um, hello.”

“Hello.”

I awkwardly exchanged greetings with her friends.

“I am sorry I’m stealing Min-jeong today.”

“No, no.”

“You must have really missed her. Can’t help it, I suppose, haha.”

They giggled and teased us.

I am embarrassed but the resilient Min-jeong brazenly waved her hand.

“Okay, well I’ll be off first. My oppa looks to be in rather a hurry today.”

Her friends giggled and laughed some more.

I persisted through my reddening face and seated Min-jeong in the passenger car.

We take the car and naturally headed for Min-jeong’s place.

Min-jeong looked at me with a sweet face.

“Are you in a rush?”

“Oh, sorry.”

“Hmph, guys always get so lonely when they want to do it.”

“I just want to be with you. Let’s not do anything, just be here with me. That’s all.”

“Yup yup, you really think we won’t do anything?”

“Eh?”

“A guy should know how to be more forward.”

I’m at a loss for words and Min-jeong got out of the car.

“Come on, come up with me, I’ll make you some food.”

“Oh, uh, okay.”

How is it Min-jeong is already playing me like a puppet.

We get up to her unit and I eat the food she makes me.

A bowl of rice that’s hot and sticky, dwengjang jjigae with tofu, kimchi, dried seaweed, and a fried egg make for the sides.

I can’t tell if it’s because she has learned well or if she was talented to begin with, but every single thing is delicious.

I finished the meal and we go to the bed.

Strip, hug, touch lips...

As if trying to fill a hole in my chest, I endlessly desire her.

And to me, she ably matches me, and she keeps stroking my hair.

It’s a strange feeling.

I roughly indulged myself in her, but instead I feel snug from her protection.

I spill out all my ambitions, and we pass the time, holding each other, still.

The heat lingeeds, and with a blushed face, Min-jeong asks me.

“Oppa, is something wrong?”

“No.”

“Then why are you like this today? You’re different than usual.”

I reply kiddingly.

“It’s because guys get lonely when they want to do it.”

“You want to get hit with a \$860 present?”

An \$860 present, that would be the luxury Japanese knife set I got for her from Denmark.

I laughed and hold her tighter.

“Geez, I can’t breathe.”

She reprimands me while she snuggles in closer. We hug like we have been one from the beginning.

“This is a big problem.”

“What is?”

“I think it’s all going as you said it would.”

“...?”

“I think I’m going crazy for you.”

She must have felt good at my words because Min-jeong giggled.

“Didn’t I say so? This is how it goes.”

“I know. What to do.”

“Starting now you’ll have to do well by me. If you don’t, later when you can’t live without me, I’ll get my revenge.”

At Min-jeong's cute threat, I can't help but laugh out loud.

"I'll do well by you. When the time comes, go easy on me."

"Hmph, I'm going to pick you up and shake you and put you down and lift you up. And have you give me expensive presents as offerings."

"Aw, don't do that."

"I'm going to bluff and say I'm going to the club and make you worry."

"That's too much. I'll stalk you."

We exchanged this joke and that joke and laugh together.

I can't even tell the time is passing by.

Somehow it's already 10.

There is only one hour left.

I should have gone back way earlier and prepared, but Min-jeong kept insisting I stay later and I wasn't able to head back.

And honestly, I just wanted to stay with her too.

Every minute and every second is too precious and pitiful.

"I really have to head back now."

"Let's just be together until tomorrow. Please?"

It has become the situation where now Min-jeong is holding onto me.

I feel like I'm coming off as the bastard whose behavior has changed because my desires have been fulfilled and I feel bad.

"Min-jeong, I have something important today. I'm really sorry. I really want to stay too."

“Hmph, you’re going to be like this?”

“I’m sorry. Tomorrow after work, I’ll come racing here straight away. Okay?”

“Whatever, wait and see what happens later. I’m going to have you beg me to play with you.”

Thankfully she isn’t actually sulking, Min-jeong is joking.

I kissed her in what could be our last, and I put on my clothes and leave.

I returned home and finish my preparations and lay down in bed.

When the time arrived, my mind became fuzzy.



“Did you get a good rest?”

The baby angel flapped his wings and welcomed me.

“Indeed.”

“Starting today you will have to clear the exam alone, but your expression is brighter than I expected?”

“You have a problem with that?”

“Yes, I expected a somber expression as if you were carrying all the sins of the world.”

“Why, I ought to.”

I do a hook but the bastard deftly avoided it. He’s like a poop fly.

“How dare you call an angel a poop fly? You want to get hit with the lightning of holy contempt?”

“...”

Don’t read other people’s thoughts without permission. You just like to tease other

people.

“The exam?”

“You can check it on your board.”

I retrieve my board.

-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-Class: 7

-Karma: 0

-Mission: During your time limit, help the brown mountain elf.

-Time limit: 30 days

‘Elf?’

It is one of the species I saw in the files that Cha Ji-hye gave me. To help an elf, this really is ridiculous.

“Give me a hint.”

“Didn’t you already get the hint?”

“What?”

“Come on now, you should hurry and get going.”

The baby angel brings up the exam door.

I took a deep sigh and opened the door and went through. A bright white expanse of light blankets my eyes.

Chapter 62

The Fourth Exam (Part 2)

I arrived at the place where I finished the 3rd exam.

The edge of the forest ends and a massive mountain blocked my view up ahead.

It's the place where I escaped the nightmare of a forest and wailed in both desperate joy and sadness.

The feelings from then came back and made my blood boil, and I carried the rage in my eyes and stared at the forest to the east.

The bastards are in there.

'I will get my revenge no matter what.'

I promised to myself and turned to the other side and headed up the brown mountain.

I don't know where the elf lives, but I decided start by going into the brown mountain.

I sensed the direction of the center of the brown mountain by using my Guider skill.

'Elves...'

From the files from the Korean arena research center, I have read about the elves.

I looked them up because as an intelligent species that aren't humans, I was interested.

Elves look almost identical to humans but have larger ears and whiter skin. They are not white like Caucasians but a white that is actually void of color.

Forest, mountain, river, sea, they absolutely love nature. Because of this, they hate humans who live by damaging nature.

They usually live in remote areas where human hands haven't reached and react most

sensitively when humans or beasts invade in their areas.

They shoot arrows well and freely use spirit summons, and the spirit summons I have is a skill derived from the elves' summons.

Rarely, a human who loves and nurtures nature like the elves may befriend an elf and learn the spirit summons, but that number, throughout the whole of Arena, numbers few.

'When they said examinees with spirit summons was only me, I can believe it.'

This exam is about helping these elves.

And to do that, first I have to approach an elf and earn their confidence, but I worry that because they are exclusive and unfriendly with humans, if I'll be able to get close to them.

The reassuring thing is that I am a spirit summoner.

These elves love nature, so they will love spirits that are embodiments of mother nature.

'If I lead with Sylph and Kasa, it might signal to them I'm not an enemy.'

I kept going up the brown mountain.

The slope is steep and every now and then I have to climb with my hands. Thanks to the physical strength buff, I am stronger and I have no problem climbing. Even if I fall, I can have Sylph catch me.

The Arachne glove is a big help. Grabbing between sharp rocks with my bare hands and it doesn't hurt a bit.

"Sylph."

-Meow?

I climbed to the top of the rock face and summon Sylph.

"Check if there is a dangerous beast or monster nearby."

-Meow!

Sylph flits off.

I let Sylph do her thing and kept on walking.

A moment later, Sylph returns and nods her head.

“Was there no excrement or footprints?”

Sylph nods her head the same way again.

In rough terrain without any humans, the fact that there’s no beasts or monsters must mean...

‘Thank goodness. This must mean the elves are close by.’

Then first, I should be careful not to damage my surroundings.

While I chop wood for a fire I may get shot with an arrow by an elf.

I keep walking and pick up sticks that have fallen on the ground and put them in my pocket.

I am in cargo pants with lots of pockets and I gather a substantial amount of sticks.

About every 10 minutes and summon Sylph and Kasa. It is not to scout the area.

It’s because I’m bored walking alone.

-Meow!

-Bark bark!

The two of them each grab a seat on either shoulders and intensely fight with each other over my head.

Sylph delicately jumps onto my head first and from there, using her front paws, keeps punching, and Kasa shoves his face at her and dislodges her from her spot.

Sylph uses her tail to pull on Kasa's legs and knock him down and confidently walks back onto my head.

Kasa jumps immediately and lands on top of Sylph.

The two kiddos bickering and fighting with each other makes me happy. As I walked, I discovered rabbit poop. I asked Sylph to hunt it down and within 5 minutes, she brings back a rabbit.

'Should I rest here?'

I make a fire with the sticks I've gathered. I handled the rabbit and am about to grill it but because there isn't a substantial piece of firewood, the first isn't very big.

"Kasa, grill it for me."

-Bark bark!

Kasa made an expression like he has to poop and then lights up a flame and cooked the rabbit in an instant.

Whoosh!

I asked Sylph to cut the rabbit into bite sized pieces. I'm eating it and it is very well cooked. A talent very befitting the spirit of fire.

To spare the summons time, I send back both spirits and continue my meal.

'there is something I have brought for just this occasion.'

"Summon item bag."

The item bag appears, hung on my shoulder, from inside I take out a small plastic bag. And inside the bag is a small amount of table salt, pepper, and seasoning/msg. I sprinkle a little of the seasoning as I eat it and the meat becomes even tastier.

Kasa really nailed it when cooking this and the rabbit is still incredibly juicy. This is indeed the best meal I've ever had while in the Arena.

But of course, it is not as good as Min-jeong's cooking.

‘I already miss her.’

When we would go out on a date and then return to Min-jeong’s place, before heading to bed, she would always prepare food for me.

The so and so average that Min-jeong had prepared became more impressive as she increased her repertoire of recipes she could make.

Especially when she took some Pollack fish, eggs, carrots, mushrooms, and other vegetables and cooked them together, I was surprised.

I sigh.

‘I won’t be able to see her for 30 days now I guess.’

Is dating Min-jeong a mistake because when I was alone, I didn’t feel this kind of loneliness.

Now I have now teammates, and I have to get used to the solitude.

Fog begins to settle in the sky. I ponder as to whether I should keep going or stop here for the day.

But then.

“Do not move human.”

Far behind my back, I hear the voice of a man.

I’m surprise and automatically shout.

“Weapon!”

The Mosin-Nagant appears in my hands.

“I said do not move.”

I hear another warning from the man.

‘Should I summon Sylph and attack?’

I don't particularly enjoy life threatening situations.

But I decide not to do that.

I put the Mosin-Nagant on the floor and raise both my hands.

"I have no intention of fighting."

"I will decide that."

Oh, will you?

I'm a little pissed off, but I hold it in. It is because I know who the enemy is. I have no doubt that it is an elf.

I can tell just by the fact alone that he called me human.

"Stay still where you are."

I hear the voice that came directly from my back and I am surprised.

How did he get so close when I didn't hear any footsteps?

The elf has approached like a shadow and I think he is inspecting something because there is no movement. I am frustrated because I can't turn around and see.

"You didn't damage any trees."

Said the elf man in a reassured voice.

"I gathered sticks that had fallen on the ground."

"You're a human with basic manners. Based on your behavior, you wandered into this area knowing it was our area?"

"Yes."

"What is it you want? We do not want human visitors."

"I want to be your friend."

The elf man snickers.

“Whether a human is wicked or honest, you always approach us under the intent of friendship. The previous shameless trespassers said the same.”

“What shameless bastards?”

“They tried to kidnap our family’s child.”

‘Human trafficking?’

That was in the files too.

It said that rarely, humans in the Arena kidnap elves and use them as slaves.

Because of their beauty, they are used as charms or for sex slavery.

Nearly all nations have legally banned it but didn’t it say that the Nerora royal family keep their expensive elves as proof of their power and flaunt them?

Because of that the human and elf relationship is turning scornful.

And it turns out that unfortunately not too long ago, bastards that prey on elves specifically have passed through here.

“Thank goodness it turns out they failed.”

“We minced them finely and turned them into plant food.”

It’s even creepier because he said it like it was nothing. He said it not as a threat, but just to tell me that that is what they did.

“But that poor child has been deeply traumatized.”

“But it is still well that the child is safe.”

I keep speaking in friendly terms.

“The one that chased the five men and killed them is me. So, human, do not try to fool me.”

"I do not."

"Tell me what it is you want."

"I want to be a friend to the elves."

"Engulfed in prejudice, you can only say that as a lie. Considering that, I will respond. Just go bac. We do not want any friends."

"..."

"We have specifically told you. So go and disappear from afore my eyes."

What now?

Thankfully I wasn't deemed an enemy, but his behavior is too exclusionist.

First, I do as I am told and get up from my seat.

Before I leave just like that, I think maybe, and summon sylph.

"Sylph."

-Meow?

Sylph sits delicately on top of my head.

"What?!"

I hear the surprised voice of the elf man.

"Human, is that a spirit?"

"Yes."

"You have learned to summon spirits?"

"As you can see."

"How can this be!"

“Is this that unusual?”

“More like a miracle!”

“...?”

Isn't it a bit far to call it a miracle? I heard it was just rare in the Arena world.

The elf man's words continue.

“A cat, wh-what a cute and lovable Sylph! This is impossible! Your existence alone is a miracle!”

“...What?”

“Here, give Sylph to me for a moment! Quick!”

“Uh, Sylph, you heard him.”

-Meow.

Sylph softly jumps from my head and approaches the elf man.

I too turn around. And I finally see the elf man's appearance.

He is a giant being, over 190 cm tall. (about 6'2")

With a slender figure.

A complexion void of any color, blindingly white.

Long ears.

A bow and case of arrows slung across his shoulder.

As expected, a handsome elf man...

-Meow~

“How could you be so cute! What a miracle!”

He holds Sylph and rubs cheeks with her and freaks out.

‘Where did the dangerous spirit from a moment ago, go?

I learned something new that wasn’t in the files. Elves like spirits. Even beyond that, they go stupid for them.

Does Sylph instinctively like elves? She’s rubbing her cheeks on him and expressing affection.

I am curious to the man’s reaction so I summon Kasa too.

“Kasa.”

-Bark!

With a poof, a flaming puppy appears.

“Gasp!”

The elf man’s eyes grow wide open.

“Human, what are you?”

“Hmm?”

“With Sylph and now Kasa, to be going around with such cute spirits! You have been blessed greatly by mother nature!”

“Oh, really?”

The elf man hugs Kasa too and flips out.

If Cha Ji-hye were to turn into an elf and a man, I think this would be her.

“Um... so, do I have to leave?”

“Go where?”

The elf man has a complete change in attitude which flusters me.

“You are a friend! You have the right! I will tell the mothers and introduce you!”

It was pointless to worry about the elves’ bias towards humans. I get the feeling things will work out fine.

Chapter 63

Elf (Part 1)

The village that the elves live in looked like the world of a fairy tale.

With strong cloth fabric draped over a large tree as their homes scattered everywhere, and all kinds of spirits flying about.

Sylph and Kasa, of course, look like the water spirit Undine and the ground spirit Noam in their various shapes and forms. There are also spirits that look like little girls and spirits that look like Tinkerbell.

“Huh?”

“It’s a human!”

“It’s a human!”

“Mr. Jake must have brought him.”

The young elves that were playing about with the spirits halted what they were doing and stared at me.

Sparkling eyes, half full of curiosity and fear.

‘Cute!’

The young elves are so cute that it randomly gave me the thought of wanting to have cute kids like them.

To try and kidnap such children, those were some bastards.

‘Brute men. It’s a good thing they were turned to mulch.’

Perhaps it is because of this recent kidnapping event that the young elves looked a bit frightened.

Should I show them Sylph and Kasa? That should make a good impression.

I'm thinking this when the man called Jake signaled to me.

"What are you doing? Follow me!"

"Oh, yes."

I followed after Jake.

I don't know if it is because he is tall or all elves are like this, but his pace is fast and it's hard to keep up.

The adult elves in the village started to take notice of me as well.

Unlike the young elves who were flustered, the adults' eyes are filled with coldness and alertness.

'Everyone is beautiful.'

Men and women alike are all beautiful.

The women all looked like they could be models.

Hair let down to flow naturally, slender hips, smooth legs.

Their beauty is made more visible by their short pants and cropped tops that show a little of their breasts.

But I don't feel a sexual attraction to them.

I sense a strong awareness that they are not human so rather than sexual attraction, I simply find them to be beautiful.

I think that the bastards that intended to slave the elves probably intended to keep them as art more than as sex slaves.

Of course, with excessive lewdness that gives way to sexual appetite, there must be humans that do find a sexual appeal in elves.

“Jake!”

A female elf approached us. She walked softly and lightly like a deer.

“Ella.”

“Jake, what is this? How is it you bring a human here?”

Ella looked at me with tempered stare.

Jake spoke.

“This human is a friend.”

“Friend? Jake, are you crazy? Have you already forgotten the last time?”

“How could I.”

“How could you do such a careless thing? Do you know how frightened Ellis got when she heard there was a human in the village?!”

“I am also another person that cares for my younger sister. Do not forget that the one freed Ellis was me.”

In the Arena, elves also use the expression persons.

Then again, unlike our world, higher intelligence isn’t only for humans here.

“And yet you bring a human here? What are you going to do for Ellis who is quivering in fear?”

Jake and Ella talked about the female elf and I got a gist of the situation.

Shameless human hunters kidnapped a young elf and she is their younger sister, Ellis.

When I appeared in the village, Ellis recalled her trauma from the kidnapping and was shaking in nervousness and her sister Ella is angry about it.

“It is also for Ellis.”

Said Jake.

“What does that mean?”

At Ella’s coy question, Jake pointed to me.

“When she sees this human, her anxiety will be calmed. She will understand that not every human is an embodiment of fear.”

“Why are you trusting of this human?”

“You will soon see.”

The cuteness of Sylph and Kasa are my proof of friendship...

“Just what exactly is going on? Weren’t you the one that was most upset at the humans last time?”

“Of course. Ellis is also my younger sister.”

“Jake...”

On Ella’s face, she is moved.

And Jake approaches her and lightly kisses her on the cheek. Ella’s pale face glows red.

Ah, they are lovers.

No wonder, their conversation sounded like a bickering argument of couples.

Ella glared at me.

“I will watch you closely, human.”

“Of course.”

I replied calmly.

Ella’s glare elevated to another level of tension. Did my response sound like a threat?

I once again followed behind Jake.

We headed towards the center of the elf village.

The center of the village is void of houses and is an empty space. It is filled with all kinds of flowers. More than anything...

‘Oh my gosh!’

What shocked me is the size of one tree.

‘Is this a tree or a building?’

It is a tree so great that it is beyond imagination. Based on the leaves, it looks to be a broad leaf variety but the height looks like it reaches the skies.

It makes me wonder if the tower of babel from the bible was this large.

But unlike the tower of babel’s sense of guilt, from this tree I can sense a great life.

A warmth like a mother?

Looking at this noble tree, I am moved, and Jake spoke.

“Wait here. Without permission from the mothers, a human cannot approach the tree of life.”

“I understand.”

Jake walked towards the great tree called the tree of life.

I am left alone and I take in the tree and am in thought.

‘It’s a matriarchal society.’

The elves’ important decisions are decided by women.

The ‘mothers’ that Jake mentioned are the rulers of this village.

Rulers?

I think leaders is probably a more appropriate term.

The free flowing atmosphere of the elf village makes it hard to believe that anyone is ruled.

Human society specialty is chaos and that isn't here, it is carefree.

With that...

"That human is our friend?"

"Jake said so."

"The human is iffy. What decision will the mothers make?"

"Hard to tell. But their decision is always right."

The elves, men and women of all ages, gather around me.

There is no elf that comes near me to talk to me, but they gather around me like a monkey at the zoo and talk about me with each other.

"Should we go see what the mothers and Jake are saying?"

"No. The mother's might not like that."

There is no order for the elves. The mothers are the leaders here and anyone can freely approach them is proof of that.

"Last time, when Ellis was kidnapped, and the mothers were discussing countermeasures, those kids gathered and cried and made a mess."

"Jake was so furious, at least he went after them."

"But rather than blame the kids, don't you think the mothers' discussions are rather long?"

Hmm, having no ranking order has this downside too.

Elves don't have rulers and subjects so due to this, the decision making process is

slowed.

How much time has passed, I wonder.

I think about an hour has passed, but still, no news from Jake.

‘What are they talking about?’

They could just take the human in to meet them, what could they possibly be talking so long for?

I grow tired and I sit where I stand.

“He sat.”

“The human sat down.”

“He must be bored.”

The elves chattered again.

This is how celebrities must feel when they go out. It must make it hard to date.

I am the center of attention for the elves and staying still alone feels weird.

At the end of some pondering, I decide to summon Sylph and Kasa.

The elves began to stir.



“He is a trustworthy human. He is a spirit summoner.”

Jake asserted his opinion strongly.

Mothers...

Underneath the tree of life, from the outside appearance, many middle aged looking women are gathered.

It seemed all the older women in this elf village are gathered here.

Amongst them, one speaks.

“Jake, I am not doubting what you say. There is no evil in a human who is a spirit summoner. But a human is not always bad because he is evil nor is he always good because he is pure.”

“There is nothing wrong in what you say there but...!”

“More than anything, it is unnatural. The reason the human came all the way here is to be friends?”

“It is definitely strange. Humans aren’t a species that move like that without an agenda. He has an ulterior motive.”

“Even if he is a good human, he may be being manipulated by a bad human. When I was younger and observing the human world, I’ve seen it before.”

The mothers’ conversation keeps evolving into a theoretical discussion of the ethics of humans.

Jake, as the decision gets longer and longer, felt frustrated.

“They are discussing other things again! This is the problem!”

The one issue the male elves have with them, is this.

No matter what the meeting is, there is a lot of chatter.

No matter the decision, the male elves move it to action right away, but the men have to wait until that decision is made.

Thank goodness the decisions they made after all that chatter was always right, otherwise, this matriarchal society would not have lasted very long.

And then.

“Mother!”

“Mothers!”

From far away, elves gathered in.

The mothers contemplate.

“Oh my, what are they doing coming here?”

“Oh goodness, well that’s the end of that meeting.”

“They must be curious.”

“They should wait a little longer, goodness!”

The elves, male and female, regardless of age, all gathered and shouted.

“That human is a friend of ours!”

“You have to accept him as a friend!”

“Yes!”

“Stop chatting and just meet him!”

“You cannot not accept him as a friend!”

“That spirit...!”

The mothers were at a loss for words.

Only Jake looked on at this situation as if I told you so.



The elves ran towards the tree of life as if to mob it, and hundreds of them make their way back towards me.

As that many people come at just me one person, I grew a little fearful.

“Gyhhh!”

“I love this Sylph! Meow, meow!”

“Kasa is shaking his tail so fast, hehehe!”

Thankfully, I am reassured by the young elves that are playing with the spirits by my side.

A crowd of hundreds of elves gather around me, and Jake and middle aged women elf walk towards me.

They look aged, but incredibly beautiful.

They all look like ‘back in the day I was quite the beauty.’

They must be the mothers that Jake was referring to.

But their numbers are too many. 20 of them? 30?

‘I thought at most it would be a few women.’

It must be that no matter what, an older women elf becomes a ‘mother.’

No wonder the decisions are slow when there are so many decision makers.

“You are the human that Jake has told us about.”

Asked the women elf who looks to be the oldest.

She looked the oldest but she too is beautiful. Strangely, she doesn’t look aged.

“I am.”

I replied respectfully.

The mothers’ gaze turned to the children that were playing with the spirits.

The mothers see my Sylph and Kasa and sigh.

“How could they be so lovable...”

“But of course. We have no choice but to accept him as a friend.”

“Of course.”

I slowly began to worry about the elves’ future.

Chapter 64

Elf (Part 2)

Thanks to my spirit summons main skill, I easily make friends with the elves.

Actually, I think perhaps that is the reason I was given this mission to begin with.

The goal of the exams is not to cause distress to the examinee. There is some kind of ultimate destination, and in order to reach that destination, every examinee has an appropriate role to that end.

Perhaps the ultimate power knew I would pass the 3rd exam of getting through the lycanthrope territories and would end up here?

“You have become our friend. But just because someone is a friend doesn’t always make them a close friend.”

Said the mothers.

“We do not yet know you.”

“We cannot just rest assured because you have adorable spirits.”

‘Rest assured?’

I never expected you guys would go head over heels over the mere cuteness of spirits!

It flustered me, but I remained calm and replied in a textbook manner.

“I agree that there are degrees to relationships. I am satisfied in that we have let go of our wariness and given ourselves the opportunity for a relationship. I hope to slowly earn your trust.”

At my words, the mothers have a satisfied look in their faces.

And so I became a friend to the elves and gained permission to stay in their village.

The young elves played with the spirits until my summons time was up after which they scattered.

“Follow me, I will show you to your arrangements.”

“Thank you.”

“I would prefer you drop the honorifics.”

“Would that be okay? Well, then, Jake, how old are you?”

“102.”

“...may I really drop the honorifics?”

“An elf’s life is thrice as long as that of humans.”

I see.

If I divide Jake’s age by three, he’s about 34, so I can say we are about the same age.

Even though of course, I am barely touching 30 years of age!

“Then, about how old are the mothers usually?”

“For our women elves, anyone over 200 years becomes a mother.”

“Woah...”

Those ajummas were all old women elves over 200 years old.

Even though they are old, they have all astounding beauty and none looked of old age, and elves must, unlike humans, age well.

The dwelling that Jake had prepared for me is a house no different than a tent.

But I have no idea what material it was weaved with, the tent fabric is as strong as a wall and the bed made of leaves and straw is soft and good.

The only thing is there is no lamp or candlelight and it is too dark.

I asked if he has any candles at which Jake shakes his head.

“Now that I think of it, yes, humans need such things. Elves can see well even in the dark.”

They live long and look young and can see in the dark. I really wish I were an elf.

“Rest well.”

Jake left me and disappeared.

I think about lighting a fire but I don't want to be a bother so I don't. I don't think elves like fire very much. Probably because fire burns trees.

But then, as the entrance to the tent gets pushed to the side, some woman's silhouette appears out of the darkness.

“Hey, human!”

It is the voice of the woman I saw earlier, Jake's lover, Ella.

But why does she sound mad?

“What is the matter?”

“Why didn't you play with our Elise!”

“I'm sorry?”

“When the other kids were playing with your spirits, my poor Elise was only staring at you!”

“Oh, did she? I'm sorry, I didn't know.”

How am I supposed to know who is where glancing at me?

But I am aware of Ella's temperamental personality and I simply apologize.

With a calmer voice, Ella speaks.

“Make sure you play with Elise tomorrow. She hasn’t been able to come out the house since you came here! If Elise can’t come outside tomorrow either, just know it’ll be all your fault!”

“ ... ”

Ella says all she wants to say and then just leaves.

I wondered what he saw in her when Jake decided to be with Ella. Then again, Jake has some temper too. Perhaps their union is fate.

The next day, I lured the girl named Elise out and she played with the spirits.

It was easy.

Sylph went to the tent that Elise was at and just stuck her tail in and wagged it and lured her out.

Elise chased Sylph to outside the tent where she saw me and was frozen in fear, but I summoned Kasa to atop my head and she let go of her wariness.

After that, it was smooth.

We spent time playing with the other children and spirits.

The elf children knew how to summon spirits as well.

The spirits the children summoned were flying around in all directions and it threw me for such a loop I thought I was seeing things.

‘But what exactly am I supposed to be helping them with?’

The question suddenly crosses my mind.;

-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-class: 7

-Karma: 0

-Mission: during your time limit, aid the Brown Mountain elves.

-time limit: 28 days 15 hours 42 minutes

I mean, I need to know what problem it was they encountered if I am to help them.

But there is no way I would have been given an impossible mission. I think finding out what it is I needed to help them with is all a part of the mission.

I decided to go ask the least formidable, Jake.

I use my guider skill to find out that Jake is to the east. I started walking in an east direction.

Jake isn't in the village.

He seems to have gone outside but I have no way of knowing how far out he's gone and I hesitate on whether I should keep going or not.

So I approach a female elf nearby and ask her.

"Do you know where Jake has gone?"

"He's probably gone out scouting, like always."

"Really? Thank you."

"But I did see this morning, Ella left the village with him, hehehe."

"Uh, thank you."

The sly laughter of the female elf made me stutter.

I headed out of the village in the same direction and keep going in the direction I sense Jake to be in.

"Divine protection of the wind."

I use the wind guardian skill and begin to quickly race.

The skill is only usable for 15 minutes so I run as fast as I can.

Pat, pat, pat!

Every time I hit the earth, my body flies forward 5, 6 meters. It feels so freeing, my body that feels as light as a feather, and I excitedly keep running.

“Sylph!”

-Meow?

“Find Jake.”

-Meow!

Sylph flies off fast.

How long did I run like this?

-Meow!

Sylph returns and points forward.

‘Good!’

I felt as if I’m close and I raced ahead at top speed.

I meet Jake.

But Jake’s face looks annoyed more than anything, and next to him...

Ella is frantically straightening out her clothes.

I stare blankly and Ella’s face starts to glow red. Their skin is so pale that even the slightest change is evident.

“What is it?”

Asks Jake in an annoyed voice.

“...isn't this neglect of duty?”

“What do you neglect of duty! What I do while I'm scouting is my choice!”

Ah, I see. Free willed elves. If this was my real world, it would have been an automatic dismissal.

“Anyway, what is it?”

“Um, well, you see...”

I think for a moment before I ask.

“Why are you out scouting?”

“You're asking why? Isn't it obvious when it comes to guarding one's territory?”

“In the village, all the men were gone, are they all scouting like you?”

“Usually we don't scout as diligently like now.”

Said Jake.

“As of late, we have heard that the area has been strange so we upped our scouting. Like the other day when Elise was almost kidnapped, human trespassers had become frequent, and the lycanthropes that live in the eastern forest who would linger on our outskirts before disappearing.”

“Lycanthropes?!”

I asked in surprise when Jake tilts his head.

“Yeah. Why are you so surprised?”

That moment, many things cross my mind.

‘It is always this way. It does not end with one exam but there are many instances when the next is a continuation of before. They are like relationships.’

Odin said so,

‘Have you not already received your hint?’

Said the angel.

And the leader of the silver clan, Leon Silver!

The bastard knew very well about the spirit summons.

And on top of that, he established a human ranch and grew his clan’s numbers fivefold in a short amount of time. Why? To what end?

‘So that’s it.’

I realized it was according to what the gods had already decided.

From when I was given the opportunity to get the spirit summons as my main skill, no, from when I was resurrected as an examinee after death, to this moment right now, it might all just be according to His plan.

“What are you thinking?”

Asked Jake.

I shake out of my thoughts and spoke to Jake.

“If it is about lycanthropes, I have a story to tell you.”

“What? Yeah, you came from the direction of the eastern forest. Is there something you know?”

I nod my head and tell him the story of what happened between me and the silver clan.

I, of course, hide the fact I am an examinee, and I don’t mention I lost my comrades.

“That happened?”

Jake’s face changed to seriousness.

“Don’t we have to inform the mothers of this?”

Stopped in the midst of making love, Ella who was frustrated and annoyed, also grew serious.

“I didn’t think much of it because the lycanthropes were small in number, but this is unexpected. We must alert the mothers.”

‘Good!’

I made a fist.

I have told them of these truths and I can definitely ascertain that I was of aid to the elves.

And there is the promise I received from Odin before I began the 4th exam. He said he would send the army to subdue the silver clan.

‘This exam will follow through easily.’

I think I’ll clear the mission and stay the remaining 28 days in the elf village. There doesn’t seem to be anything else requiring my assistance.



Jake finished his scouting and came back to the village and told the mothers the news I told him.

That evening, I receive a call from the mothers.

“We heard your story from Jake. Please recount for us once more.”

“Yes.”

I once again retell the adequately dramatized story.

“The lycanthrope by the name of Leon Silver does indeed know well about spirit summons.”

“It is amateur, but he does know how to counteract spirits.”

“Having grown the clan’s numbers fivefold in the past twenty years could be him

gathering the strength to attack us.”

“The 20 years is what gets me.”

Said one of the females amongst the mothers.

All the other mothers must have remembered something because they all pitch in another word.

“Recalling back, in that time, didn’t we fight the lycanthropes once?”

“Yes, an older lycanthrope used weapons and attacked our territory.”

“That was about 24 years ago.”

Gathering bits and pieces of their rambling story, I get the gist of the situation.

24 years ago, an older lycanthrope that had his silver clan leader position taken by a challenger, took his family and was eliminated from the silver clan territory.

The cast out family stepped foot into the brown mountain and got attacked by the elves and were annihilated.

“They said they lost that older lycanthrope. They chased him until the end but eventually lost him, I know, cause that was my husband.”

“I didn’t think much of it at the time...”

“Who would have known that a cast out lycanthrope would have returned to the clan.”

Basically, the old lycanthrope who lost his entire family and without a place to go, had given up all hope and in despair, returned to the silver clan.

But that silver clan took back the returned lycanthrope, and Leon Silver had heard the stories of the elves from him and showed a keen interest in it.

And all is explained.

Chapter 65

The Tree of Life

“The silver clan itself is not the problem.”

The oldest of the mothers gestured with her hands and everyone quieted and she remarked.

“When over a 100 lycanthropes attack us, we have nothing to fear. Our husbands and young men will easily suppress them.”

The mothers nodded their heads in agreement.

“But the problem we have to think about is not that. We have to take a bigger picture.”

The eldest of the mothers keeps speaking.

“I am talking about the continuous bad omens that keep happening to us.”

At those words, the other mothers look surprised.

“Yes, that is true, Ellis’ kidnapping not too long ago and also, the humans have been trespassing more frequently.”

“Lycanthropes from the East, and humans from the north...”

“That is not all. From other directions, recently, other monsters have been frequently creeping in.”

“There is but only reason bad omens keep happening to us.”

“It is indeed the tree of life...”

Mumbled one mother as a tear glistened from her eye.

As she says so, the other mothers quickly halt her.

“Shh!”

“Be quiet!”

“Yes, this man is a friend, but are you really going to mention things regarding the tree of life in front of a human?”

The mother realized she misspoke and shook her head.

“I’m sorry. My mistake.”

What is this?

Something I’m not supposed to hear?

Thinking back, Jake did tell me that I was not to go near the tree of life.

Even after being deemed a friend, that did not change.

Everyone is on edge about this so I pretend I didn’t hear it and move on.

Then the oldest mother asked me a question.

“Human, let me ask you one thing.”

“Yes, you may.”

“What is your reason for having come to us?”

That moment, my mind recalls my answer.

I had expected that I would receive a question like this.

Because the reason being that I just want to be friends is a thin reason, even from my perspective.

I speak.

“The place I used to live was a district governed by Viscount Bastian.”

I use the story I heard from Odin in Copenhagen.

“I was sick of being persecuted from Viscount Bastian’s tyranny and left. I would rather go to a place without humans and be one with nature and in that thought, I went to the forests.”

I sighed.

“In my ignorance, I thought that if I had spirits, I would be safe so I headed into what is called the forest of the dead where I was attacked by lycanthrope.”

“So you ran away and ended up here.”

Said the eldest mother.

I nodded my head.

“I barely escaped the forest but I didn’t want to return to the place I once lived. Then I recalled that you all lived on the brown mountain and thought perhaps I could be friends here and came.”

The mothers nodded their heads.

Them seemed to like the idea that I grew tired of humans and wanted to live as one with nature.

Well, it is a story made tailored to elf culture.

But the eldest mother looked at me and made a strange smile.

Her smile made me feel uneasy.

I felt like a kid that is nervous about getting a hidden report card found out.

“How strange.”

“...what do you mean?”

“As you have heard, from north, east, south, and west, all directions, bad omens have befallen us. Even from the center of our own village.”

The village center.

She is talking about the tree of life.

“And in this time, you have come to us claiming to be a friend. I am curious as to whether you are a bad omen for us or a good one.”

“...”

“Do not misunderstand because I say this. We do not suspect you.”

“I understand that I have yet to prove my loyalty to the mothers.”

“Do not worry about that. You have already proved it.”

The other mothers nodded and agreed.

I have proved my trust?

Is she talking about what I told them about the lycanthrope?

Was that enough to earn their trust and establish myself as a friend?

The eldest mother spoke.

“It is the spirits.”

“Huh?”

I stuttered for a second.

In the end, it's the spirits? As long as the spirits are cute?

“You think it strange that we took you as a friend just after seeing your spirits.”

“...Honestly, yes.”

At my words, the mothers laughed.

The eldest mother made an age defying charismatic laugh as she spoke

“But we are correct. We can tell the summoner based on the spirits.”

“Really?”

“Amongst humans, there are rare spirit summoners. Of course, not all summoners are good. I have heard of despicable humans who use spirits for bad things.”

“...”

“But the nature of the summoner is reflected in the spirit.”

“Excuse me?”

“The appearance of a spirit is a mirror that reflects the heart of its summoner.”

To a surprised me, the eldest mother’s explanation continues.

“If you were an evil person, your spirits would reflect that nature and take an aggressive form. Will you show us your spirits once more?”

“Yes. Sylph, Kasa.”

I summon the two spirits.

The cat of wind and the puppy of fire appear and elate the mothers.

The eldest mother extends her hands. Sylph and Kasa approach her and behave adorably.

The eldest mother picked up Sylph and hugged her in her embrace and spoke.

“See this. See what cute and lovable spirits they are?”

“They are.”

I am well aware how cute they are.

The eldest mother continued to speak...

“You were lonely?”

“...?!”

I suddenly feel like I’ve been punched in the heart.

“You will have lived a lonely life up to now. I am sure you must have wanted comfort from someone.”

“That’s...”

My voice was shaking and I could not go on speaking. Many thoughts cross my mind. Things buried under a deep sleep, awoke.

The lonely days I spent for years while I studied for the civil exam.

One by one, getting jobs, getting married, the friends that disappeared from my side for one reason or another...

That was all met with a sudden death.

Exam.

Arena.

My destiny of having to fight to live.

I returned to the harbor of my family, but no one knows my agony.

I have to fight alone.

‘Is that why Sylph came to me?’

I look to Sylph. The eldest mother who was holding Sylph and adoring her, handed her to me.

“Here, she is yours.”

“Ah...”

“She is a dear friend that came to you to comfort you.”

Sylph jumped into my lap.

She came up onto my right shoulder and rubbed her face into my cheek.

-Bark, bark!

Kasa quickly jumped atop my left shoulder and wagged his tail and does his aegyo.

The mothers looked at the spirits and laughed.

‘So that was it.’

You guys came to me in your forms to comfort me.

...I had been lonely. From a long time before.

Embarrassingly, tears came to me.

The eldest mother looked at me with a benevolent smile.

I am thankful to her for having taught me the meaning of the spirits, this precious truth. I want to thank her somehow. Not because of the exam, but from my heart.

‘There is no coincidence.’

It was no accident that I got the spirit summons, nor that I got Sylph and Kasa.

Then, nothing so far has been an accident for me.

At the end of my thoughts, I spoke.

“Excuse me, but there is something I wish to ask you.”

“Go on.”

“What problem has arisen with the tree of life? Is the tree of life ill?”

If that is the case, all the skills I have are not by chance, but an arrangement of the gods.

The faces of the mothers that had looks at me and my spirits in happiness, all turn dark.

The eldest mother nodded her head.

“Yes, your guess is correct. For decades, the tree of life’s health has been deteriorating. We did not want to believe it, and as long as it didn’t wither on the outside, there was no definite way to tell, so we tried our best to deny it. But the time has come for us to accept it. The tree of life is growing weaker.”

The sadness is evident on the mothers’ faces.

A few of them are shedding tears. It is because the tree of life is a very important existence to them.

“I do not know anything about the tree of life. I know neither what it means to all of you nor what will happen if it disappears.”

“The tree of life is the foundation that maintains nature. To us elves that love and live with nature, it is like a parent.”

“...”

“Even if the tree of life disappears, us elves can still live. But we will have lost a great meaning. And in more realistic terms, the energy of the spirits will become weaker.”

She continues.

“The tree of life is the great basis of nature, and as a great life force, it gives strength to the nature surrounding it. It is the same for spirits. If the tree of life disappears, the spirits will get weaker.”

Listening to it all, the tree of life is to the elves that live in nature, their very identity.

I ask.

“When that tree of life withers at the end, is there no other way?”

I was worried it was a rude question, but she is undisturbed by it.

“That isn’t the case. We can find a new tree of life and nourish it.”

“So the seed to a tree of life exists somewhere?”

“It is somewhere. Because every tree has the possibility of becoming a tree of life.”

“Excuse me?”

The eldest mother points to the great tree of life a little way away.

“What tree does that look to you?”

“Um, I’m not sure. Other than it being the tree of life...”

“It is called a zelkova tree.”

I am shocked.

A zelkova tree grew this great and large as a building?

It is unbelievable.

There are tons of zelkova trees on Earth too!

The eldest mother smiles and speaks.

“Of course, not all zelkova trees grow that large and become a tree of life. Out of all the trees, those that can grow into a tree of life are very few.”

“Then we have to find a tree that has the potential to grow into a tree of life.”

“Finding it is not hard. They are few but we can find them. On this brown mountain, there are a couple that we have found.”

“Then can you not grow those into them?”

“We already are. The young men scout the east and north but our husbands care for those trees every day in the east and south.”

The eldest mother sighs.

“But because they have potential does not mean they will become a tree of life. We can put our heart and soul into nurturing them but in the end, most die before becoming a tree of life.”

According to the continuing story, 30 years ago, a pine tree that almost became the tree of life withered and died.

60 years ago, and even 200 years ago in her youth, the same thing happened.

‘This is it!’

This is the real exam!

If I hadn’t found this and even if I cleared the exam, I would have only received a very small amount of karma.

I smile

At my smile, the eldest mother looked at me doubtfully.

Hearing a regrettable story and then smiling, of course it’s weird.

“I am not sure if this will help. Would you look?”

Then, I make what chairman Park Jin-seong goes crazy for, the flame of life.

Chapter 66

Tree of Life (Part 2)

In my hands, a small and round flame appeared.

“This is?”

Rare to see, there was a look of surprise on the eldest mother’s face.

And even amongst the elves, she who has lived the longest, this was a first for her as well.

Then again, this is a skill that only I have, so that made sense.

“It is called the flame of life. I think that I am the only one in the world that can create it.”

The eldest mother, with a face full of surprise, extended her hand to me.

“Hold on one moment, can you show that to me?”

“Of course.”

I handed the flame of life to her.

The eldest mother carefully received it and shivered as she stared at it.

“It holds life force, from the energy of nature. It is as you call it, a flame of life! How, how did you create this?”

“Here, show me as well!”

“We want to see it too!”

The mothers swarmed in in angst, all eager to get a better glimpse at this flame of life.

Good to hear euphemisms exploded from here and there.

I looked on at the spectacle with a satisfied expression.

Then, the eldest mother asked me in a shaking voice.

“Would you be able to teach us how you made this?”

“I am sorry. I want to teach you, but I myself do not know how I am able to create these.”

“Do you have any clues as to how?”

“It feels kind of like a mix of the power of spirits and a healing potion. I actually don’t know. It’s an ability that just came to me one day...”

I can’t really tell them it was through a skill synthesis now, can I.

The eldest mother was utterly disappointed.

“The power of the spirits and healing potions? I am not sure that is all it would take. This is indeed a happening that is a miracle.”

I believed it.

Because this special skill synthesis is the miracle that changed my life too.

“Would we be able to heal the Tree of Life with this?”

“But isn’t it too small?”

“There is no way this is enough.”

The mothers get into a heated discussion.

I cleared it up.

“I can only make one a day. If that would be of help, while I am here, I will make one every day and give it to you.”

“What do you mean one a day?”

“Ah, but this is too small!”

“It would have been good if you could make this a little bigger!”

“You guys. It is a great thing already that we have found a way to treat the Tree of Life.”

“That’s true!”

Everyone is busy chattering when the eldest mother clapped her hands and silenced them all.

She speaks.

“It is important how we use this flame of life that can only be made once a day. Shall we use it to heal the sick Tree of Life, or rather, to grow a tree that has the possibility of growing into a Tree of Life.”

“Ah, that’s a good point...!”

“It is definitely too small a portion to use for the Tree of Life. But it is plenty in growing a small tree into the Tree of Life!”

“We have to use it for the Tree of Life!”

“And when would we finish healing it with such tiny flames?”

“If we try to heal the Tree of Life with these tiny things it will take too long.”

“Then, turning a small tree into the Tree of Life, does that take any less?”

It’s a heated discussion scene.

The one that quieted them all is the eldest mother.

She asked me.

“How long can you stay here?”

“If possible, I will stay a while. At the moment, I don’t have any pressing plans.”

“We wish for you to stay here as long as possible. Actually, we wish you would live with us forever. You have passed being a friend, now you are the same as family.”

‘Wow, family?’

The order of our relationship has jumped a few steps.

But even so, I cannot stay forever with the elves.

Maybe I could if the exam was to live with the elves here.

I speak.

“How about this. We will use 28 days’ worth of flames of life to heal it. Depending on the results, if there is no effect, we will use it to a tree that has its potential.”

“That sounds good.”

The eldest mother nodded her head.

“I agree.”

“Yes, if it doesn’t work, on to the second-best option.”

“Why didn’t we think of this? First, let’s try it out.”

“This must be why our husbands complain about us!”

“Ho, ho, ho!”

These ladies are boisterous.

To think, this society is matriarchal and goes through decisions by way of such banter.

And then.

“There he is!”

A group of child elves are running towards me.

“Human hyung!”

“Human oppa!”

“Are you refilled again? Summon your spirits!”

“I’m going to play with the puppy and the kitty!”

The important meeting was about to be thrown into chaos.

“Oh, the children are here!”

“How could anyone resist!”

“Anyhow, thank goodness the decision has been made already.”

The mothers quieted down.

And so.

The force that influenced the mothers who lead this society is not even their husbands, but the children.

I am surrounded on all sides by elf children then the eldest mother quietly took the flame of life and left.

The elf society is indeed fresh and fun.



From that day forward, I created one flame of life every day.

In the beginning, the eldest mother came to retrieve it every morning, but after four days, this is what she said.

“You are now our family and you have a right to approach the Tree of Life now.”

This ajumma, she finds it annoying to come by every day.

From then on, I take the flame of life to the tree myself and blow it into it.

It is ever interesting to see the tiny flame seep and disappear into the large tree.

‘I don’t know that this will be enough.’

The Tree of Life is so great its top looks the sky itself.

Mesmerized by its beauty, I drew the tiny flame into my palm.

As if I am trying to reach that sky with palm, I repeat this all every day.

‘Well, I’m sure something will happen.’

I have faith and repeat again and again.

The core of religious precepts.

That is the backing of my faith.

First, after losing all my friends and being thrown into crisis, a great special skill called the skill synthesis was given to me.

Second, I gained the flame of life, and chairman Park Jin-seong, ailing from a terminal illness, came to find me.

Third, thanks to chairman Park Jin-seong, I gained the help of Odin, and with the help of the soldiers he sends, I will defeat the silver clan that is preying on the elves.

Fourth, because the elves have been anxious over the sick Tree of Life, I was able to approach because of my flame of life.

Look at how perfectly everything has lined up!

I am making way just as the higher powers want me to.

There is always a hint in every exam.

Even if I am not told what the hint is, if I think carefully, there is always a hint.

That's because that hint is always a commandment of the gods.

Now I finally feel like a real examinee. I feel like I might now what this exam is about.

'Whether this helps the Tree of Life or not, I can tell by the exam evaluation.

When the mission time is over, I will clear the 4th exam. And according to the results, I will receive karma.

Depending on how much karma I receive, I can tell how well I have done in the exam.

If there was an effect, I will receive lots of karma, and if this was all for naught, I will surely receive less karma.

I spend the remaining exam time leisurely.

Without the threat to my life and spending the exam in peace. I wonder if this is okay.

I am not worried about the lycanthrope silver clan's threats.

First of all, Odin promised to defeat them with his army, and even without them, the male elves will put up a good fight.

In this village of a little over 100 of them, all male elves are experts with a bow and spirit summons.

Additionally, they move without making a sound in mountain and forest, able hunters.

Having been made a part of their family, I receive their protection and plan to spend my days pleurably.

Of course, I is not always relaxing.

"Let's play!"

"Human hyung, where are you?"

Aww damn, the beings that the leaders are even afraid of have appeared.

I quickly hide myself.

“He’s hiding!”

“Let’s find him!”

“He doesn’t stand a chance!”

The young elves one by one summon their spirits. In an instant, tens of spirit animals close in on me.

Every which variation of sylph and other spirits pull me out of my hiding place.

“Hehehe, hyung!”

“Human oppa, just give up.”

“On the brown mountain, you cannot escape our gaze, human hyung.”

“Ha...”

My spirits are a given, but now they want to play with me too. I taught them rock-paper-scissors and horse piling and they went crazy for them.

“Teach us games today too!”

“The girls said they don’t like horse piling!”

“It hurts my back!”

Okay, okay.

After pondering carefully, I pick up five small and round pebbles. I place them in my palm and show them jacks (gong-gi).

What boy bastard plays gong-gi?

I have a noona and a younger sister so I got good at it, so what?!

“Woah, wow!”

“What is that!”

“That looks fun!”

“So cool. Human oppa is the best.”

The young elves go crazy and begin to play.

They have Kasa fetch them pebbles or use Sylph to shave the rocks smaller and rounder. Scary children...

The elf children become engrossed in playing gong-gi.

Soon, the grown-up girls that had just been glancing at the children also follow suit and play.

According to what I have heard, the young men that have gone out to scout are playing horse piling.

I have also heard the rumor that after the introduction of rock-paper-scissors, the mothers' meetings have progressed much faster. If that is the truth, the future of the elves really worries me.

‘I should never teach them gambling.’

No matter what I teach them, it worries me how consumed by it they get.

And so, my exam progresses, every day as enjoyable as the last.

And then, when my exam time is almost up, something amazing happens.

Pat!

“Huh?”

I didn't summon it but suddenly before my eyes, my board appears.

And on it are written some words.

-Spirit summons (main skill): summon a spirit and use the power of nature.

*Spirits for summons: Sylph, Kasa

*Entry level 2: summons time 2 hours 15 minutes

“Level 2?”

I’m completely surprised. My main skill spirit summons has gone up!

‘I didn’t even use a karma prize!’

Raising a main skill from entry level 1 to 2 should have cost me 500 karma.

But out of nowhere, it has gone up in the middle of my exam.

‘Maybe...’

I look at the Tree of Life.

This morning, like before, I have come to it to blow in the flame of life.

‘The Tree of Life is a being of nature, and with a great life force, it gives strength to the nature surrounding it. Spirits are the same. If the Tree of Life disappears, the spirits too will become weaker.’

To speak in opposite terms, if the Tree of Life exists, the power of the spirits is stronger.

The spirit summons is borrowing the power of nature, being close to the Tree of Life that gives energy to it has nourished me as well.

That is the only way I can explain it.

‘Such good fortune!’

I shiver.

Things are working out so well. I almost think it may be compensation for the atrocities from the 3rd exam.

Chapter 67

The results of the fourth exam (Part 1)

Bboo- bboo-

“Congrats, returning home in glory!”

For the first time in a long while, the baby angel blew his horn and made a big fuss.

Every time he flew around, his bundegi that thrashed left and right uninhibited made me quite uncomfortable.

Regardless, like he said, this time, I was returning in glory. This fourth exam was, in many ways, very meaningful to me.

First, it being a long exam of 30 days, I finished it relatively safe.

Second, I got the idea of divine interventions* and got a feeling for the general direction of the exam.

(TN: I’m not actually sure what this means. I think he’s trying to say that he was able to find the correct path to follow through divine means?)

Third, thanks to the Tree of Life, my spirit summons level increased.

If I could say that I lost too much during the third exam, I could also say that in compensation for it, I gained many things. Not that anything could compare to the lives of three people...

“Wow! You are so impressive.”

The baby angel clapped his hands and complimented me.

“You are becoming the ultimate examinee that we have wanted.”

“...”

“Keep doing as you have been. Every exam has a specific goal and we want the examinee to hone in on that. We don’t just thrust examinees into peril for amusement.”

“I know.”

“Alright, okay. You want to know your 4th exam score?”

“Of course.”

“Then what are you doing not summoning your board? It’s not like this is your first or second time, are you an idiot?”

Boil, boil.

I had thought ‘what a change of pace that his behavior was amiable’ but sure enough, he finishes by pissing me off.

“Board retrieval.”

As I said it, the board appeared and the results were displayed.

-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-Class: 10

-Karma: +2000

-Mission: Rest until the next exam

-Time limit: 30 days

“Woah...”

I trembled.

I was speechless at the quantity of my prize.

My class increased up by 3, and I received an outstanding grade with 2000 karma.

“These results are a reflection of value of my deeds?”

“Correct.”

“How are these results?”

“What do you think?”

“The best scores for a 4th turn examinee?”

“So you know. Good for you.”

The baby angel was being sarcastic but I paid no mind to his provocation.

Because my decisions yielded the ultimate success.

I just rested at the elf village and did nothing but make the flame of life every day.

It was so leisurely that at times, I felt nervous.

Am I wrong?

There is no way the exam could be this easy.

Could it be I’m doing this mission all wrong?

I fought with those thoughts.

But the results are in.

‘I was right!’

I could go crazy with happiness.

“Seeing examinee Kim Hyun-ho happy makes me oddly annoyed. Go on. Get out.”

The baby angel, who was complimenting me in the beginning, was provoking again.

The exam door appeared.

I raised a middle finger to the baby angel, then lightly stepped through the exam door.



11 am.

On my smartphone were three text messages.

[Hyun-ji: stupid oppa ㄸㄸ I tried to wake you and you didn't so I was late for class!]

[Chairman Park Jin-seong: Contact me as soon as you wake up]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^: how dare you be so cruel and leave. I will get my revenge!]

I smiled. I sent a reply to each of the three.

[Me: shut up]

That one was for Hyun-ji.

[Me: I will leave for work soon.]

That one goes to chairman Park Jin-seong.

[Me: I'll call you as soon as I'm off work. I really love you <3]

That's for Min-jeong.

Really, the whole month I was with the elves, I really missed her so much. Even more so with Jake and Ella's relationship.

I have to see Min-jeong this evening.

I get a text from hyun-ji.

[Hyun-ji: typo? That's a typo, right?]

[Me: I said shut up]

[Hyun-ji: don't call me a chicken]

(TN: Dalk-chyuh means shut up but phonetically the 'l' is silent so it sounds like 'dak'.

Dak means chicken so they sound the same which is why she says “typo?”.)

TOIEC 400 pointer, the fried chicken business is your only viable future. Why are you leaving an open path and trying to take the difficult forest one?

Before I go to work at the cabin, I decided to organize my karma.

‘Where will I use this?’

A whole 2000 karma.

When will I use it all?

There are too many places I could use it.

But I have to use it wisely, so that it would definitely be of use to me in the next exam.

It has to account for whatever may happen in the 5th exam and however much karma that will yield.

But then, what will the fifth exam be?

‘It must be to revive the Tree of Life!’

Following the context and flow of things, I was sure that will be the continuation in the next exam.

With jumping three classes and a karma prize of 2000, that is proof that my thinking was correct.

But I was sure the next mission will be to fully cure the Tree of Life.

Following the divine interventions, I was deducing that for the final goal of the exam, the Tree of Life must be cured.

‘But then...’

I don’t like to gamble.

But this time, I have to have conviction to succeed.

“Board retrieval.”

The board appeared. The karma I had received was proudly displayed.

“If I invest all my karma into the flame of life, how many levels can I jump?”

-The following is a display if you use all your karma for the flame of life (synthesis skill).

-Flame of life (synthesis skill): breathe the flame of life in and revive life. Two uses per day.

*Intermediate level 2: energy revival, anti-aging, effect on illness and curses.

-Remaining karma: +200

“Intermediate level 2...”

I deeply pondered this decision. If I use 1800 karma all into the flame of life, I'll be an intermediate level 2.

I can make two flames of life per day and the effect will also be stronger. There was also the added option of treating illness and curses.

But if I do that, all I have left is just 200 karma.

If the fifth exam is to cure the Tree of Life, putting it all in and using 1800 karma to do that will be the right choice.

But what if that isn't the exam?

There is one variable to consider.

I lost a bit of strength in my idea and asked the board again.

“Show me what it will be if I raise the flame of life to intermediate level 1.”

-Flame of life (synthesis skill) raised to intermediate level 1, here is this option.

-Flame of life (synthesis skill): breathe the flame of life in and revive life. Two uses per

day.

*Intermediate level 1: energy revival, anti-aging, effect on illnesses and curses.

-Remaining karma: +700

“So, the options the same?”

The remaining karma is 700.

It seems that going from intermediate level 1 to intermediate level 2 is what costs 500 karma.

Whether it is intermediate level 1 or 2, what was the same was being able to make two flames a day and treating illness and curses.

I'm sure there will be a difference in strength of the treatments, but I will have the leeway of 700 karma and I can use that to increase the level of another skill.

“Okay.”

At the end of thinking it through, I make my decision.

“Karma prize, I will raise my flame of life to intermediate level 1.”

Pat!

The light that emerged from the board seeped into my body.

I looked again at the board. I verify that the flame of life has increased to intermediate level 1.

Now what I have left is 700 karma. Hmm, where to use this?

‘For now, there’s no need to increase my spirit summons.’

I now know that staying near the Tree of Life increases the spirit summons level. Why use karma to increase it when I can get that for free?

“Karma prize, I will increase my physical strength buff.”

-Physical strength buff (assist skill) has increased a level.

-Physical strength buff (assist skill): rapidly strengthens fitness.

*Intermediate level 1: gain the fitness level that surpasses human limits.

-Remaining karma: +300

Fitness that exceeds human limits! This is the level that Kang Chun-seong had shown me.

The next thing is easy.

“Raise the level for reflex skill.”

-Reflex skill (synthesis skill): improved ability to maneuver the body.

*Entry level 3

-Remaining karma: +100

I spent it frugally but I still only have 100 karma left.

With this, there is no skill I can increase the level on.

‘Should I get an assist skill?’

If I get an assist skill I can also use it as an ingredient for a synthesis skill.

I thought that was a good idea so I asked the board to show me the assist skills I can get with the remaining karma.

Amongst a variety of lots of skills, one catches my eye.

21. Teleport (assist skill): Leap through space in the direction you desire.
Think of the direction and say ‘teleport.’

*Entry level 1: distance 1 meter. Cool down time 1 hour (-100)

Being only an entry level 1, the distance was a measly 1 meter.

But this is a very useful skill. In a dangerous second, if I use this, I can dodge an attack.

Not only that, but I can get through walls or doors.

Additionally, I'm looking forward to what skill I can create by combining this with skills I already have.

'This will definitely be of use somehow.'

"I select teleport."

-Teleport (assist skill) has been selected.

-Remaining karma: 0

"Now it's getting fun. Skill synthesis!"

-Select the skill or item you wish to synthesize.

1. Skills available for synthesis: spirit summons (Sylph), spirit summons (Kasa), physical strength buff, guider, teleport
2. Items available for synthesis: Mosin-Nagant, item bag, Arachne gloves

*Items used for synthesis will be used.

"Synthesize spirit summons Sylph with teleport."

-Synthesizing spirit summons (Sylph) with teleport (assist skill).

-Synthesis failed.

"Pfft, then synthesize Kasa with teleport."

-Synthesizing spirit summons (Kasa) with teleport (assist skill).

-Synthesis failed.

"Then physical buffer with teleport?"

-Synthesizing physical buffer (assist skill) with teleport.

Pat!

-Synthesis successful. You have gained transmission (synthesis skill).

-Transmission (synthesis skill): you can pass an object flying toward you through your body without damage.

*Entry level 1: effect lasts for 3 seconds, cool time 1 hour

“Yes!”

I’m so happy I can jump.

The created transmission skill and also the teleport skill will be helpful in dodging dangerous attacks.

‘Good. Let’s keep synthesizing.’

I can test the skills later at the cabin.

“Synthesize guider and teleport.”

-Synthesizing guider (assist skill) with teleport (assist skill).

-Synthesis failed.

Another failure. I could only make one skill. It’s a little disappointing.

But in my disappointment, I revert back to the items that I can use for synthesis.

The Mosin-Nagant, the item bag, and the Arachne glove.

‘Should I try the items?’

It doesn’t matter if they fail, but this is more dangerous because I could end up with a useless skill and losing the item.

‘First, exclude the Mosin-Nagant. That’s too important a weapon.’

I try to synthesize.

“Synthesize Arachne glove with teleport.”

-Synthesizing Arachne glove with teleport (assist skill).

-Synthesis failed.

Now the only thing left is the item bag.

“I feel like this will yield something.”

The item bag is the backpack that holds things so I can pass them through the exam door.

And the teleport passes me through space.

They both have to do with passing through space. If I combine the two, I’m sure something will turn up.

‘Let’s do it.’

If I fail, I wonder if I can beg Odin to give me an item bag.

First, I take out all the things from the item bag.

“Synthesize item bag and teleport.”

-Synthesizing item bag with teleport (assist skill).

Pat!

-Synthesis successful. You have gained spacial storage

-Item bag has been used.

-Spacial storage (assist skill): create a spacial storage space and store items. Say ‘store’ or ‘retrieve’ to use.

*Entry level 1: 50x50x50cm

‘Awesome!’

I felt an excitement as if I had won the lottery. I had just gotten a storage space that is much more comfortable to use than the item bag.

I put my hand over the items I had taken out of my item bag and said

“Store.”

Schook!

The bullets and water bottle and Swiss army knife disappear.

I recall the water bottle and say the following.

“Retrieve.”

Schook!

The water bottle appeared in my left hand.

‘This is the best!’

I think I can steal with this method even. Of course, I won’t do that, but still.

And like that, I used up all my karma. I felt satisfied with how well I managed to use my karma so carefully.

Chapter 68

The Results of the Fourth Exam (Part 2)

“Bastard! Why are you so late? You want to be fired?”

“Thank you for everything thus far.”

“Ha, on whose authority?”

Chairman Park Jin-seong gave me a hug as I got out of the Porsche cayenne.

It was a sign of how desperately he yearned for my return.

I’m sure some of it was for the cure to his disease but treating me this way, doesn’t make me feel bad.

Am I to cure for free? I am getting a lot of money and aid.

“You’re here, give me one.”

“Hmm...”

“What, kid?”

“That is... hmm...”

“Oh what is it! You want more money?”

“Yes.”

“Kid, sure I am a billionaire but is this some highway robbery? Have I given you too little so far?”

“No, the thing is. I’ve raised my flame of life to intermediate level 1. It explained it definitely works to cure terminal illness.”

“Is that true?”

“If you don’t believe it, then fine.”

“You bastard!”

I slightly dodged chairman Park Jin-seong’s attempt to flick my forehead.

“Oh? Catch him!”

Chairman Park Jin-seong shouted to his guards.

‘Crap.’

I leapt from my position and landed to the side on top of an old pine tree.

Currently, my physique has surpassed human limits and doing something like this was nothing.

The guards stared at me blankly not knowing how to proceed and scratched their heads while as they laughed

From atop the tree I shouted out to chairman Park Jin-seong.

“How much are you going to give me? This time, you’ll see a marked difference.”

“We can fix the price after I eat it and get an examination and see how effective it is. I received an exam yesterday too so I can clearly mark the difference.”

‘Well, chairman Park Jin-seong isn’t one to be stingy with his money.’

I nodded my head.

“Okay.”

“Then come down, asshole.”

I jumped down from the old pine tree and handed over a flame.

Hwaruk!

The flame that appears from my palm. It's no longer a marble sized flame, but a fist sized flame.

"Oh my, it's big."

The color returned to chairman Park Jin-seong's face.

"I've thought about it, but is there a need for you to eat it?"

"Then what?"

"Couldn't I just push it into your body?"

I spoke from experience from having blown the flame into the tree of life every day.

At my words, chairman Park Jin-seong hesitated for a moment then moved the flame to his lower chest.

'Is it lung cancer?'

Seeing him put the flame of life into where his lungs are, I presumed that's the case.

The ball of flame seeped into chairman Park Jin-seong's body.

"Huh, this was all that needed to be done. I've been eating it all this time for no reason."

"That's an elderly person's specialty. Putting everything good for you in your mouth."

"Shut up."

"How do you feel?"

"Haha, how do I say this? I feel really good, very good but I can't express it in words."

Chairman Park Jin-seong inspected his own body and was amazed.

His eyes would probably flip if I told him I could make two of these a day.

"It's been a while, would you like to go for a hunt?"

“Sure.”

We packed out things and headed out to hunt. Particularly today, chairman Park Jin-seong was full of energy and he walked ahead.

“This, I feel better than I did when I was healthy. How very interesting.”

But after about an hour, we decided to take a short break.

Chairman Park Jin-seong sat on a boulder and asked.

“How did the exam go?”

“I cleared it.”

“Woah, good job. So, there was a point to getting the aid from the Nordic exam group?”

“Yes, well, I suppose so.”

Even though honestly for the fourth exam I spent my days doing nothing related to fighting.

I hadn't verified if Odin was able to use his army to obliterate the Silver clan.

Now that I think of it, Odin won't know that my exam is over. Should I give him a call?

“How do you think the next exam will be?”

“I don't think the next one will be very difficult either.”

“Really? That's good.”

If it flows according to my thinking, in the following fifth exam, I will be much stronger.

Through the tree of life, the spirit summons grew stronger, and with the karma I received from clearing the exam, I'm going to increase my skill level.

The sun is about to go down and we haven't found any prey.

“Shall I summon Sylph?”

“That’s alright.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong shook his head.

“It must be hard and at times, one must fail in order for hunting to be fun.”

That sounded like chairman Park Jin-seong’s life philosophy.

“Is that your businessman philosophy?”

“Huh? What crap is that? If you fail in business, that’s not fun.”

“ .. ”

“You have any idea how many execs and staff I have to feed, how could failing be fun? Are your exams fun? You’re a funny lad.”

It was useless that I said anything at all.

Chairman Park Jin-seong left urgently for the hospital to get re-examined.

I thought of testing out my skills and training, but today it was already too late so I decided to head home.

I miss Min-jeong so much. From my position, I haven’t seen her in 30 days.

I took out my smartphone and gave Min-jeong a call. At this time, she is probably at home.

-Hello?

Min-jeong’s voice sounded happy. But along with her voice, I hear loud music.

With a fast tempo and strong beat, music that makes you want to dance...

“Mi-Min-jeong , where are you?”

I thought ‘no way’ and asked in a shaky voice.

-Where do you think I am?

“Um, perhaps, a club?”

As I said so, Min-jeong exploded in laughter.

The loud music suddenly disappeared.

-I'm at home.

Huh?

“Then what was that music?”

-I got the music to use when I got your call.

She teased me!

“Min-jeong , oppa has a weak heart. Don't do that anymore, please?”

-Hmph, says you, you just left after taking care of yourself.

I suddenly recall the events from a month ago.

“It's not like that.”

-Hmph, I don't know.

“Anyway, I'll be there soon.”

-Do what you like.

And then Min-jeong just hung up the phone. Pretending to be sullen when she's not even angry. She's telling me to make her happy somehow.

‘I should buy a present.’

I haven't seen her in a month and I want to get her a gift.



Ding dong-

-I don't take the newspaper.

Said Min-jeong through the interphone.

"I know you can see my face through the interphone."

-I said I don't take the newspaper.

"Is the interphone broken? Even so, you can hear my voice."

-Wow, so persistent. I said, I don't take the paper.

"I brought a present."

-Oppa~!

The door opened immediately and Min-jeong rushed out and hugged me.

I smiled and hugged her and lifted her up with one hand.

Min-jeong screamed.

With the other hand, I closed the door and went inside.

Min-jeong is excited in my embrace and when I laid her down on the bed, her expression became sour.

"What is this?"

"Huh? What is what?"

"Why the bed again? You want to be in trouble?"

"Ah, I didn't realize."

Gah, it's been 30 days since I've seen you! Even though you saw my yesterday.

“Give me the present, the present.”

I took out a box full of macarons from my cross bag.

“Gyak, they look so tasty!”

Min-jeong gave me a peck on the cheek with her lips and runs into the kitchen saying she wants some coffee to go with them.

She delivered up two espressos and we have tea time with the macarons.

“You have better judgment than I thought.”

“Thank you.”

“It would have been funny if you brought a really expensive present haha.”

“Ha, haha...”

“Huh? Why that expression, oppa?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

“...”

“...”

“...take it out.”

“Ok...”

Obligingly I answer as I put my hand in the cross body bag.

‘My hands! Don’t fail me now!’

With my hands in the bag, I remove the wrapping so the brand logo on the box is evident. Then I show her the necklace inside.

“Oh my gosh, it’s beautiful!”

It was a beautiful black stone necklace. A woman from the shop picked it up for me but I bought it because I thought it was pretty too.

Min-jeong was closely looking at the necklace in admiration when she stared at me.

“How much was this?”

“Uh, 40 bucks.”

“This? No way!”

“They were selling it on the street so I bought it.”

“Really? Then it’s an imitation. Wow, it looks so much like the real thing.”

“Oh, really? I don’t really know that stuff.”

I don’t know but the internet search engines sure did.

And the GPS app sure knew where the store was located.

“Hehe, an unni I know has this. It looks just like the real thing. It looks like a real Marni necklace.”

“Well, good, I’m glad you like it.”

I can never get caught that that is a luxury item worth over \$1000. A Marni store wouldn’t sell a knock-off.

“Put it on me, oppa.”

“Mm.”

I took the necklace with two hands and went behind Min-jeong. But that was a trick. As if she’d been waiting for it, Min-jeong headed straight for my cross-body bag.

“Ah, no!”

“Hah!”

Min-jeong takes out the box with the Marni logo and wrapper.

“Oh lookie here? In that time, you managed to put your hand in the bag and removed the wrapping and opened the box? What good hand skills you have.”

I raised my physical strength buff to entry level 3 and it improved my hand dexterity too.

“Spill it. How much was it?”

“...it was slightly over \$1000.”

“Crazy, that’s insane!”

Min-jeong slapped me hard on the shoulder.

“Are you trying to prove you’re soft? This is why Hyun-ji is so worried about you!”

“Uh, I just feel falsely accused right now...”

“About what!”

I haven’t seen you in 30 days and I was just happy so I bought you a present!

...from Min-jeong’s point of view, we’ve seen each other every day and I randomly bought a really expensive present so I see why it looks bad.

“Return it.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Return it quick. We haven’t been dating that long, I can’t accept something so expensive.”

“I don’t know, I don’t know, I can’t return it. I won’t.”

I crushed and ripped apart the necklace box.

“Gyak! Now you can’t return this!”

“I won’t. Just have it. I just wanted to buy it for you.”

Min-jeong stared at me.

“This won’t do. Oppa, you need to be punished.”

“Punished?”

Min-jeong took out her smartphone.

“Uh, why are you taking out your phone?”

She put the necklace on her neck and suddenly made a “v” with her hand and took a selfie.

Then she sent a picture message but the person receiving it is...

“No, don’t!”

I despaired but it is already too late.

[I got this from oppa^^ Marni <3]

After that, somebody’s message arrives to my smartphone.

[Hyun-ji: Hey, you crazy pushover! You got lots of money???)

“Kuk.....!”

I despaired in an OTL position. At this, Min-jeong shook her finger.

“Hehe, oppa, anyway, thanks for the present. It’s really pretty.”

“That’s okay...”

“Oppa, are you sulking?”

“...”

“Come here, oppa.”

I flinched at her strong seduction but I resisted. I was sulking. How could she actually tattle to Hyun-ji!

‘I am not a sucker, I’m rich. I have no need to be stingy with a piece of gum!’

How could it be difficult when I have \$19 million (USD) just sitting in my bank?

“You won’t come, even if I do this?”

Min-jeong started to take off her clothes one by one.

Delicately, every time a piece of clothing fell to the floor, I flinched.

Finally, when the necklace I gave her is all that remained on her body, I lost my endurance.

When the heat died down, Min-jeong stayed cuddled in my arms and whispered.

“You don’t have to give me things like this. Just stay by me. That’s really all I need.”

...that is the very thing I cannot promise you.

Thus, I kept Min-jeong, who I have reunited with in a very long time, in my arms, and fell asleep.

At that time, I didn’t realize that I should have kept my smartphone turned off.

Chapter 69

The Turning Point

The smartphone vibrated and Min-jeong instinctively reached out her hand in her sleep.

Next to her was a deeply sleeping man who gave her a very expensive gift.

Still blurry, Min-jeong opened her eyes and stared at the screen and for a second, didn't believe what she was seeing.

[Chairman Park Jin-seong]: \$1 million every day, the amount is too big so keep it separate in a Swiss account]

The sleepiness instantly disappeared. Only then did she realize that this wasn't her own phone.

Min-jeong quickly turned off the phone screen and put it down. She covered herself up and pulled the blanket over her head.

Her heart was pounding relentlessly. Her chest was shaky and she couldn't calm down. Min-jeong dug herself into Hyun-ho's arms.

'I have to erase it from inside my head. That is Hyun-ho oppa's business.'

But she couldn't help what stays occupied in her mind.

A million dollars a day?

From chairman Park Jin-seong?

A Swiss account?

The men from Jin-seong group that he said he had a skirmish with, she recalled the events of that night. Then really, is it that Park Jin-seong chairman?

‘Just what kind of person is oppa?’

She looked at Hyun-ho’s face, peacefully sleeping, and felt anxious.

She dug deeper into his arms.

“Hmm...”

Hyun-ho hugged her in his sleep.

‘Oppa, you can’t.’

Min-jeong felt Hyun-ho’s warm embrace.

‘I want to take back what I said back then. Please be an everyday ordinary guy.’

The reason she became interested in Kim Hyun-ho was because she thought he was a man unlike other men.

But now that was what frightened her.

Because he might be a guy that she can’t handle. Because to be near him, she might not measure up.

Now, it wasn’t just interest anymore, she genuinely liked him.

Expensive presents, a rose-lit future, she didn’t need any of that. She just wanted to be with him always.

Min-jeong truly only wanted that.



I opened my eyes to the morning sun light, Min-jeong was already awake and looked unusually tired.

“Did you not sleep well?”

“I must not have. I woke up in the middle.”

“Yeah?”

I washed and put on clothes and check the phone, and I see a text message from chairman Park Jin-seong.

‘\$1 million every day? Then every week that’s \$7 million.’

That means that the effects were that good.

Anyhow, that’s \$7 million a week!

It is too much money for a single individual.

Like chairman Park Jin-seong said, it was probably a good idea to put it in a Swiss account. Since Swiss banks effectively protect client information, or so I’ve heard.

‘Was Switzerland close to Denmark?’

Might as well go to Denmark and meet up with Odin while I’m over there in Switzerland.

Speaking of, I should contact Odin too.

“Oppa, eat breakfast.”

“Oh, thanks.”

I sat down at the table and got ready to eat the meal Min-jeong made. Today was wonton soup with beef and eggs and tofu and other things.

“Wow, this looks tasty.”

“Eat lots.”

“This must have taken a lot of work to make. Aren’t you working too hard?”

“I tried it as practice, so.”

I just stared straight at Min-jeong.

Min-jeong was startled by my gaze.

“What is it?”

“Oh, just wondering why you seem down today.”

“Me? Not at all.”

“Really? Then okay.”

Min-jeong was unlike her usual cheerful and joking self and it was weird.

‘Did she?’

A thought occurred to me.

I thought possibly not, not that I suspect it, but it also explains why Min-jeong looked so tired.

Should I check it?

I raise my smartphone and pretended to check something. My eyes were pointed towards my screen but I was observing Min-jeong’s reaction.

Indeed.

Min-jeong kept glancing over at me. I had conveyed my concern over my smartphone.

‘Min-jeong...’

And I got all confused.

Regardless, I pretended not to notice and ate my meal. The wonton soup was delicious. She has good cooking skills.

Suddenly, Min-jeong carefully opened her mouth.

“Oppa.”

“Yeah?”

"I'm sorry, oppa."

Min-jeong came right up next to me and spoke.

"What?"

She hung her head down low.

"Last night in my sleepiness, I accidentally saw your phone. I thought it was a text to my phone."

"Whew."

I actually let out a sigh of relief. I grabbed Min-jeong in a huge hug.

"Op, oppa?"

"Thanks for telling me."

"Oppa..."

Then Min-jeong realized the situation and sniffled.

"I'm sorry I looked at your phone."

"No, it's okay, it was just a sleepy mistake."

"I'm sorry. Hiing (crying noise). I couldn't sleep after that."

"Did you worry a lot about it?"

"Yes."

"Min-jeong stuck to my body and whispered.

"Oppa, you don't hate me do you?"

"Ayy, of course not."

I stroked Min-jeong's hair.

I gave her a simple explanation for the text from chairman Park Jin-seong.

“I have a business relationship with chairman Park Jin-seong. I made a small business with my friends but it happened to catch the interest of chairman Park Jin-seong...”

This time too of course, I spit out some bogus story.

It kind of overlapped with the business deal with friends story I gave Hyun-ji so I think it's a good idea.

“Then oppa, when your business succeeds you'll become a millionaire?”

“Yeah, I already am.”

“So that's why you brought that expensive gift yesterday?”

“Um, that's because I'm a pushover.”

“Hehehe, no. A capable man isn't a pushover.”

“It's already too late. I'm a pushover.”

“Aw, oppa.”

Min-jeong acted cute next to me throughout the whole meal.



Min-jeong had a morning class so I dropped her off at school and I headed straight for the mountain lodge.

Like always, I gave chairman Park Jin-seong a flame of life.

“Like I mentioned, I think I'll go take a trip to Switzerland.”

“Go ahead.”

“I'll be gone for 2 nights 3 days.”

“What 2 nights and 3 days for setting up a bank account? I can't go with you this time.”

“I want to tour around and visit Denmark too.”

“Oh you bumpkin, that damned tourism...”

“It must’ve been nice for you having travelled all over the world. Anyway, you’ll have to miss your flame for a day or two.”

“Ay, when will you be going?”

“I’m not sure. First, I’ll give Odin a call.”

“Do what you want. I can skip a day or two.”

“Wow, really?”

“I got an exam yesterday and the cancer cells have definitely shrunk. The doctor says if they continue to shrink at this rate, I might be in complete remission in about 20 days.”

“That’s good to hear.”

“When I hit remission, I’ll give you another big sum so don’t worry about that part.”

“I don’t worry about that. You are the republic of Korea’s richest man, I’m sure you’ll compensate accordingly.”

“Haha, you turd. The ways for you to make money are endless.”

I looked at him with a ‘what does that mean’ face.

Chairman Park Jin-seong spoke.

“Chairman Han Man-Young from Future Auto is also in poor health these days. When you get to our age, we all end up breaking I suppose.”

“Ah!”

It’s true, amongst the rich people there are handfuls that are aged and ill.

‘This will make me an incredibly rich person.’

Not tens of millions, but thousands, no, I could accumulate all the won in the world.

But on second thought, I wonder if there's a need for any of that.

"Please keep it a secret, my skill."

"Why?"

"What do you do with all that money? I think it'll become annoying and burdensome."

"Then again, that is true too. Oldies might come from here and there and bother you while you prepare for exams and they might distract you."

"True."

"Understood. I will keep it a secret."

"Thank you."

"Don't mention it, I'm thankful you saved me."

That day I passed the day practicing two skills, the teleport and transmission.

I teleported next to a tree and then used transmission to just pass through the tree.

At the beginning, I felt a little dizzy, but with the 1 hour cool down time and practicing it over and over, I got used to it.

In the instance of the transmission skill, I threw a rock up in the air and used the skill to test it. The rock passed through my body and fell to the floor.

'I should be careful with this one.'

The transmission skill is 3 seconds.

Everything passes through my body in those 3 seconds. But after those 3 seconds, if something doesn't complete its pass through?

Then I get the grotesque incident of having that something remains in me.

'I really shouldn't use this unless I have no other option.'

Like in a very dangerous situation or to use when I am sure that it is completely safe.

Or if the skill level increases and the effect time gets longer. Because if the effect time gets longer I would feel like it would be safe to use.

I was training like this when it happened.

As if he'd been waiting, I got a call.

"Mr. Kim Hyun-ho?"

"Yes, Mr. Odin."

It's Odin from the Nordic exam group.

-I called you back as soon as my exam was over. Thank goodness you are well.

"Did you just finish?"

-Correct. I was in the Arena for 40 days. Did you clear your exam?

"Yes."

-Whew! Thank goodness, indeed! I am sorry I could not help you.

"Huh? What do you mean?"

-Oh? Did you not know? The suppression was unsuccessful.

"A fail?"

-That is strange. Wasn't your 4th exam, this past one, to do with the lycanthropes?

"It wasn't completely unrelated. But I had no reason to fight with the lycanthropes. But a failure, was the silver clan strong enough to counter the army you sent?

-It was not the silver clan. Loyalty and skill, I sent 300 trustworthy knights and soldier. Those lycanthropes were no problem.

“Then what is it that happened?”

-Do you remember Bastian?

“Yes, uses violence to oppress the citizens...”

-We were defeated by those bastards. Hearing from a knight who survived by the skin of his teeth, they had entered the death forest when Bastian’s army surprise attacked them.

“...!”

I began to tie the silver clan with Bastian.

It began to explain a lot of the situations from the Arena.

-How about we meet and talk about this?

“Will do, when can I come see you?”

-It doesn’t matter, any time works. Oh, right, I guess I’ll need a separate time to practice.

“Practice time?”

-I wasn’t able to keep my promise. I want to compensate you for that with something else, is there by any chance an item you need?

“Huh? No, theres no need to go that far...”

-There is the money I received from chairman Park Jin-seong and most importantly, I broke the promise so it’s a matter of my honor. Because I couldn’t keep my promise, you could have died.

Well, I’m sure that wouldn’t have happened.

I didn’t say it out loud but I spent a leisurely time in the elf village.

-Within 1000 karma, I will comply no matter what it is so just say the word.

“A, a thousand karma? That much?!”

-It is not a small amount, but to me it is not all that burdensome an amount either.

“How so? And still. No matter how small the amount, karma is of all importance. There is no need for this. If I need your help later, I can come to you again.”

-Just try and say something. I might already have it or I can acquire it in the Arena and I might not have to use the karma at all.

“Um, then...”

At the end of pondering, I carefully say.

“Can you acquire a rifle?”

-Rifle?

“Yes, I have a Mosin-Nagant but due to a lot of things, it has a lot of uncomfortable factors.”

-A Mosin-Nagant, it is a rather old rifle. I’m sure it is uncomfortable.

“Of course, it is difficult to get a gun without using karma to itemize it, isn’t it?”

After saying it all, I ask out of embarrassment.

But surprisingly, Odin replies with a laugh.

-No, if it is just that, there is a way to get it in the Arena. Without using any Karma.

Chapter 70

Gunsmith (Part 1)

-Did you think amongst all the examinees, there wouldn't be a gun specialist?

"A gun specialist?"

-Indeed. There is an examinee whose main skill is making guns in the Nordic exam group.

"Ah!"

There is an examinee like this!

Of course there was.

Any modern man from this world must have thought of wanting to use a gun in a matter of life and death. Like I did.

-There is a time limit so the examinee doesn't just give a gun to anyone, but I am not anyone. Come to Copenhagen in four days. I will meet you there then.

"Understood."

I finished the call and got a gist of a plan.

Tomorrow, I will go to Switzerland and set up an account and then going straight to Denmark would be good.

First, I sent a text to chairman Park Jin-seong and explained the plan and asked him for a translator.

But the reply I got was very unexpected.

-I have prepared everything for you. You just have to go.

“Really?”

-Yes, I’m sure you would do just fine buying a plane ticket and setting a hotel reservation and setting up a bank account. I know you. You little shit.

“Hehe...”

-Also, because I said a Swiss account, you think it’s just any bank in Switzerland?

“Is it not?”

-Read some newspapers while you live. Swiss banks aren’t like they used to be. They entered a tax convention with our country so you can’t hide your back money anymore.

“You know this well. Like someone who has done it a lot.”

-Shut up. Anyway, the bank I was thinking of is specific. It’s a bank for all the examinees around the world.

“Huh? Something like that exists?”

-All the things associated with the exams and Arena cannot be revealed to the public. Because of that, there is no way to explain the assets an examinee acquires from selling majeong.

That makes sense.

Which is why I want to deposit my money into a Swiss account as well.

-For an examinee who makes a lesser amount, it can be set up disguised as paychecks, and for examinees that make grand amounts like you, that becomes a bit of a problem.

“So it’s a bank for examinees like that?”

-Yes, the Swiss have made some benefits of their own with this kind of business. One who has tasted meat before eats it best.

In other words, no matter all the threats that America throws at them, this special bank has intense security that will never divulge private information.

-Anyway, I've made all the preparations and they'll contact you sometime today.

"Okay, thank you."

It's something I came to realize after meeting chairman Park Jin-seong but he really is timely and efficient with work. It was probably why he's so good in business.

Thanks to chairman Park Jin-seong, my travel plans become much simpler.

I make a call to let Min-jeong know about my plans.

-Oppa?

"Yeah, its me."

-Aren't you in the middle of work right now? Hehe, you couldn't wait to hear my voice, huh?

"Of course."

We exchange a conversation that if someone else were listening would raise goosebumps, and I tell her.

"Hey Min-jeong, starting tomorrow, I'll be overseas for about 2 nights and 3 days.

-Switzerland?

She definitely didn't forget. That text.

"Yep, Switzerland and Denmark."

-Oppa...

"Yeah?"

-Oppa, I love you so~so~ much!

Min-jeong's voice was suddenly filled with excessive aegyo.

I got what that meant right away.

“You want to come with?”

-Hehe, is it okay for me to go with?

“Yea, you can tour around while I’m taking care of business. But, do you have a passport?”

-Yes, last year, Hyun-ji and Ji-hyun and I took a trip to Tokyo.

“Okay, then start getting ready right now. We might be leaving tomorrow so. And leave the ticket to me.”

-Okay~!

Min-jeong’s voice is full of excitement.

Now when the person chairman park Jin-seong tasked calls me I have to tell him/her to reserve another plane ticket.

More than that, oh to spend 2 nights and 3 days in Europe with Min-jeong. Hur hur hur, this is going to turn out to be a very happy Europe trip.

Just thinking about it gave me a sweet feeling and I felt like I’m was flying in my Porsche cayenne.

But then what happened when I got home.

“Oppa!”

As soon as I walked in the door, Hyun-ji sticks to me like glue.

“What, fried chicken girl?”

Hyun-ji suddenly knelt down, face down and grabbed my bottom of my pants.

“Uh, what the hell are you doing?”

First after grabbing me tight so I can’t run away did she show her true intent.

“I’m going to go too! I’m going to Europe too! Switzerland! Denmark!”

...Yoo Min-jeong!

Why does my girlfriend have such loose lips? Are her and Hyun-ji of one flesh?

“Hey, you noonchi-less* thing! We’re going on a trip as a couple, stay out of it!”

(TN: Having noonchi is kind of like saying you have situational awareness/you understand the situation. In this case, he’s saying his sister doesn’t have the awareness/understanding that she should let them go alone for certain reasons.)

“Huangg! (whining sound) I’m going too! Switzerland! Denmark!”

“You can’t! You have to study!”

“Psh! You’re pouring money on that bitch Min-jeong! What kind of oppa doesn’t take care of his dongsaeng?!”

“Have you already forgotten the money I gave you just a while ago? You have dementia?”

“Huangg, me too! Take me too! I have a passport too!”

“Yeah, it must be nice having a passport. Now let go of me!”

“No, I won’t!”

Oh my god, I’m going to go crazy...

According to my memory, Hyun-ji is a hunting dog that never let’s go once she’s got a bite in you.

Especially if the hunted is me, she has never failed at the hunt.

Because of that, how much did I have to sacrifice to her since we were young!

“Then I will be blunt. Min-jeong and I are going to use one room, don’t bother us.”

“I won’t!”

“Okay.”

Eventually as I give in, Hyun-ji jumped up and down in glee and started the phone calls. Bragging about how she's going to Europe.

"Whew."

I let out a sigh and went into my room.

Then I got a call.

-Mr. Kim Hyun-ho?

"Yes, who is this?"

It is a familiar woman's voice.

-I am contacting you under orders of the chairman. I am Lee Soo-hyun. Do you remember me?

"...ek?"

-Haha, is there some sort of problem?

Her small laugh sounds joyful.

Why of all women!

"Uh, no there isn't."

-Thank goodness. I have, for now, booked the ticket but am calling in case you needed anything changed.

"Oh, I do have a change. Can you book two more tickets please?"

-Do you have a group?

"Yes, two people."

-Understood. Please text me their English names and their date of birth. Thank you.

"Yes."

I ask Hyun-ji and Min-jeong and get their English names and birthdays and send it to Lee Soo-hyun.



The next day, according to the time Lee Soo-hyun said, we arrived at the airport.

The whole ride there I was peeved and Min-jeong is effortfully soothing me with her aegyo.

“Hyun-ji said let’s hang out and I said I can’t for three days and she kept hounding me why not and where I was going.”

“You could have said you are visitng family or something, there are lots of reasons.”

“Oppa, you would have been gone three days too, Hyun-ji is bound to have figured it out. What if she got peeved at me for lying to her, how would I have handled that aftermath?”

“True, true. How would you have handled me when you got back?”

Hyun-ji brazenly nodded her head up and down and said so.

I just grit down on my teeth.

I thought it would be an intimate time in Europe! Who would have known a TOEIC 400 pointer would get in the way like this!

“You should have stayed home and studied for your TOIEC...”

“Oppa, I’ll have you know, I caught up my grades. I’ll be at 700 points soon!”

“You’ve studied all that much and still not reaching 700...”

I ground my teeth sincerely at Hyun-ji’s unfortunate aptitude.

Hyun-ji is upset but thanks to it, I’ve finally won an argument.

“I’ll take care of the plane and room and board but everything else, let’s let each to their own.”

“Oppa, what about Min-jeong? Is Min-jeong self-pay too?”

Min-jeong clung to my arm and brought out the aegyo. The sweet touch I felt on my arm made me laugh like an idiot.

“Of course I’ll take care of you. Don’t worry about money, let’s have a great time.”

“Oppa, you’re so cool!”

“Hehehe.”

Trust in your rich pushover oppa.

But then Hyun-ji clung to me on the other side.

“Oppa! What about Hyun-ji?”

What, dis bitch.

(TN: No, it didn’t say that but its close enough.)

“Oh my, who is this? The fried chicken business’ bright newcomer.”

“Awww, Hyun-ji too! Older brother, take care of Hyun-ji too.”

“What are you saying? Get off me. Its gross.”

“Iing!” (crying/whining sound)

After forcing Hyun-ji into submission we arrived at Incheon airport and Lee Soo-hyun was waiting for us. What will come to pass has come.

“Hello. I am Lee Soo-hyun.”

At her greeting, Min-jeong’s eyes suddenly spewed out hell fire.

From Min-jeong’s lycanthrope-like glare, I avoided my gaze.

“Oh my my, unni, you’re Lee Soo-hyun?”

All of a sudden, Hyun-ji pretended to know something.

“I am indeed. Is there something you have heard about me?”

“I heard you’re a great career-woman!”

At those words, Lee Soo-hyun gave me a meaningful smile.

‘How does Hyun-ji know something like that?’

I look at Min-jeong but this time, she’s the one avoiding my eyes.

...if you guys don’t exchange secrets with each other, do your tongues grow thorns?

During the whole boarding process, Hyun-ji asked Lee Soo-hyun all sorts of questions and at her answers, she was busy oohing and awing in admiration.

In that situation, at the Incheon airport store section she nagged me to buy her this and that.

I gave in and bought her makeup, Hyun-ji is so happy with it and Min-jeong looked at her with envious eyes.

Min-jeong, unlike Hyun-ji who is family, wasn’t in the position to nag me to buy things.

Eventually, I had to buy Min-jeong something too. Min-jeong refused to the end. While she held a bottle of Chanel perfume in her hands.

Lee Soo-hyun looks at all of us with just a fun face.

The time to board came and people started standing in line at the gate but we didn’t need to, we just showed the ticket and checked bags and got on.

First class boarding doesn’t need to wait in line.

“Wow!”

Hyun-ji looked at the first-class space and was amazed.

Min-jeong was amazed too, but covered her mouth, and I am too but pretend not to be.

Others in the first-class section looked at us and laughed. Fuck, this is embarrassing.

But I soon forgot the embarrassment.

“Ah, I miss Min-jeong.”

“Oppa’s not next to me, I’m lonely...”

Each seat is spaced individually in first class and her and I put on an Altair and Vega show (star crossed lovers).

“Ugh, those two.”

At our love display, Hyun-ji became very aggravated.



Having Lee Soo-hyun with us definitely made it more comfortable.

Lee Soo-hyun planned the schedule, translation, guide and took care of calculations, everything, she settled.

It seemed our flights were taken care of by Jin-seong group. The chairman is indeed generous.

The first day, we arrive at Geneva, Switzerland, as soon as we arrive, we checked into the hotel and began touring.

We walked the streets of Geneva and enjoyed being tourists, then dropped off the tired Hyun-ji and Min-jeong at the hotel, and Lee Soo-hyun and I just the two of us, moved on.

In order to set up an account at the examinees’ private use bank.

When Lee Soo-hyun and I are about to leave with just the two of us, it bothered me a bit that Min-jeong’s face was aglow with jealousy.

We get into a taxi and moved towards somewhere, when suddenly Lee Soo-hyun said.

“Your date is very cute.”

“Oh, yeah.”

I flinched.

I mean, the one flirting was Lee Soo-hyun but I feel like I’m shrinking and that fact is sad. This is all because I’m lacking in power.

The place we arrive is in the suburb area on the 10th floor of some building.

There is no sign or company name for the building and that’s weird.

As soon as we walked in, two security guards said hello, and exchanged some sort of conversation with Lee Soo-hyun and gestured us to the right.

“They said the account setup is that way. Follow me.”

I chased after Lee Soo-hyun behind her, and glanced back at the security guards. Those people, probably nationals?

As we went further into the hallway, something that looked kind of like a bank appeared.

But there only appeared to be employees, not a single patron.

Lee Soo-hyun took out and showed a bunch of papers to a counter employee and has a conversation. The counter lady employee looked at me and said something and gestured.

Lee Soo-hyun provided a translation.

“She is asking for your identification.”

I handed over my passport.

I put in a password, sign this and that paperwork...

After many processes, I get one single card.

Chapter 71

Gunsmith (Part 2)

The design of the card I got from the bank is different than a usual bank.

Unlike an average card, it was heavier in weight and appeared to be made out of metal rather than plastic.

The outside was in a matte black finish.

The front of it had the letters ARENA engraved and on the back, the card's number itself was engraved too.

Other than that, there wasn't anything else for the design and it made it even cooler.

It made me think of cards given to VVIP.

'This is really cool!'

When I check out and I take out this card, I think it will draw some respect.

I am in awe when Lee Soo-hyun explained to me.

"It is called a check card."

'Interesting.'

On our way back to the hotel, I touched the card the whole time. Having something like this, I felt like I am some kind of amazing person.

This must be why rich people go crazy over unique cards.

As night drew in, we took in the nightscape in Geneva and toured around. We walked together and laughed and talked, and it was a fun time.

Then the next day.

In Geneva, from the morning, we toured the places we missed and around noon, we got on a plane and headed to Denmark.



“Take care of them please.”

“Yes.”

At my request, Lee Soo-hyun nods her head.

“Have a good visit, oppa.”

“We’re going to go have some fun first~!”

Min-jeong and Hyun-ji waved their hands and disappeared with Lee Soo-hyun.

While I go to meet Odin, they’re going to tour around Copenhagen.

I went to the basement restaurant I went to last time.

I give my name to the worker at the counter who then verifies something then nodded his head and guided me.

We get to the front of a room and knock and I heard Odin’s voice.

“Come in.”

I opened the door and went in.

Inside the room were two people.

One of them was a blonde and young handsome man, Odin.

And the other was man in his mid-50’s with an awesome beard

“Is that the friend?”

Asked the middle-aged man with the awesome beard. Odin nodded his head.

“It is. Mr. Kim Hyun-ho, welcome.”

“Yes, it’s been a while.”

We shook hands. After, I shook hands with the middle-aged man as well.

“I am Neils Oslon.”

“I am Kim Hyun-ho.”

This ajusshi named Neils must be the gun maker.

Odin introduced Neils.

“Oslon is a 13th turn examinee, and the missions he’s cleared is small, but he has spent a considerable amount of time in Arena.”

“I think I’ve spent about 30 years in Arena.”

For a second I doubted my ears.

“30 years?”

“Yeah, I got old and died from a chronic disease and got made an examinee. Exam or whatnot, I should have just died, for some reason I said sure, I want to live and whatnot and now I’m in this boat.”

“Hold on, then, how old are you?”

At my question, Neils answered.

“You really are a rookie.”

“Yes...”

“My age is 57 years old. If I combine the years I’ve spent in Arena, I’m nearly 90 years old, but no matter how long a time you spend in Arena, you do not age.”

I learned this truth for the first time.

The time spent in Arena does not age your body. That means...

“That means it is possible to receive a test where you have to spend a long time.”

“Indeed. That’s why I’m a 13th turn but have spent 30 years there. It really is tiresome.”

“Just what kind of test were you given?”

I asked.

Neils shivered his teeth as he spoke.

“I was told to become an apprentice at the town’s blacksmith. That was my first exam.”

“ ... ”

“A blacksmith is a really penniless slave life. I had to beg to be used and bossed around as a free slave to the blacksmith.”

There are exams like that.

I learned that too, that not all exams are a matter of life and death, from my own 4th exam.

“My exam that took the longest was the one where I had to make a rifle.”

Neils continued to mumble talk.

“As a muzzle loading gun, I got the general shape of it, then gave it to a wizard and asked him to put a spell on it. Using a method of using magic to shoot out the bullet and thus creating a gun, was I able to clear the exam.”

“Huh? Is that the muzzle-loading magic rifle?”

“It is. I created the first one of those.”

I became blank.

Odin provided a simple paraphrase.

“All the items you get from karma prizes are things you can find in Arena.”

The muzzle-loading magic rifle that Neils invented was, for a short while, popular in the northwest provinces, but production costs and performance were incredibly poor and died out.

“Thanks to that magic rifle, I was able to safely pass my 2nd exam.”

“You cleared the mission using a piece of crap like that?”

Neils had a surprised look on his face. Even the creator of the gun admitted its poor performance.

Then again, if it wasn't for Sylph, I wouldn't have been able to use it.

“To have used an item like that and be able to make good use of it, you are that good at target shooting? You are worthy of getting a gun.”

“It's all thanks to the spirit summons.”

I explain to him simply about Sylph. Neils slapped his knees and shouted.

“That's it! With that, even a crap gun, you could shoot well with!”

“Yes, as long as it doesn't break while shooting.”

“I don't make guns so poorly they break while being shot.”

Neils said it like he liked me.

“Alright, for you, you deserve to get a gun I make. Well, I already have debts to pay to Mr. Odin here so I would have given it to you anyway.”

I looked at Neils with eyes of anticipation.

What kind of gun is he going to give me?

If he can, might as well it be an automatic, no, even if its small, a semi-automatic gun would be good.

With every shot I shoot, having to cock back the bolt, that bolt action is too much effort.

Because of that, with Leon Silver right in front of my nose I wasn't able to shoot him.

He saw my muzzle direction and my finger pulling the trigger and avoided it.

With a semiautomatic or automatic gun, I could have shot in succession and even at best he wouldn't have been able to dodge them all.

"Tell me about the gun you want. Of the ones I've made, I'll give you the one closest to it."

At his words, I replied right away.

"Automatic firing system would be preferable. If not, at best, a semiauto would be good."

"The ones you've used thus far were pieces of crap muzzle-loading magic guns and Mosin-Nagant's, those two, so I see why you think that. A Mosin-Nagant... that's what maniacs use to goof around with because it is cheap."

Neils let out a sigh of regret and shook his head.

"I have yet to create a gun with an automatic firing system. Of the guns I've made, as for semi-automatics, I have one rifle and a couple revolvers."

"In that case, I will take the rifle."

"Think it over carefully."

"Excuse me?"

"Why do you want a semi-automatic gun? If you want to overcome a little discomfort of use, with the Mosin-Nagant you can show a good show of force and power. But the aim and the reload and the bolt action, Sylph does all of it?"

"..."

"If the situation is not in your favor because of the bolt action, that would only be when you are in a close combat situation."

At those words, I couldn't help but relive the day Hye-su died.

...that's true.

The bastard was in very close range to me.

"If it is for attacking an enemy when it is close, how about a revolver? If it's a revolver, I can give you two."

"Two of them?"

"You're not taking the aim anyway, right? Sylph does it. Then if you grab a gun in each hand and wave them around aimlessly, they'll both hit accurately anyway, won't they?"

At Neils' idea, I couldn't hide my surprise.

After hearing that, yeah, that's true!

If it's a close combat fight, that method is a lot stronger.

If it's a far distance, I can have Sylph shoot with the Mosin-Nagant like she does now.

"You are incredible. To come up with an idea like that!"

"In an area without anybody, the short exams were 2 years and on the longer end it was 6 years; while clearing my exams, how do you think I survived the boredom?"

"..."

"I spent my time playing and doing all sorts of things. Because I was bored."

Living alone for years is the perfect recipe for losing your mind.

It's easy to image a middle-aged man playing, wielding a gun in each hand.

Neils summoned two revolvers and gave them to me.

"Take them."

"Thank you."

I took the two revolvers and checked my board to verify.

-Neils H2: The one and only gun maker in Arena, creator Oslon's semiautomatic revolver uses .357 magnum rounds.

Load: 9 + 1

*Effective range: 200 m

*You cannot transfer to others or exchange for karma.

(TN: I think this means 9 rounds in the magazine and 1 in the chamber. It doesn't really explain.)

"It's more impressive than I thought."

"Because I practically copied the desert eagle."

"Ah."

No wonder, the design of the gun looked like I'd seen it a lot before.

"A magnum (bullet) has strong force but in exchange it also has a strong recoil so it is difficult to use. But of course, that doesn't apply to examinees?"

"Yes, that won't be a problem."

My physical strength buff is intermediate level 1, making my wrists the same as steel.

Having two revolvers I can use in close range made my heart skip a beat in joy.

In addition to these weapons, the physical strength buff and the reflex ability, the divine protection of the flame and divine protection of the wind, even the leader of the silver clan, Leon Silver, wouldn't be a problem.

I wondered if it was possible to get a shooting related skill somehow.

'Maybe if I combine the guider skill with the gun, I can make a skill like that?'

Sounds possible.

When I combined the physical strength buff and guider, I got the reflex ability. It gave me a skill to know the path to move my body in.

So then if I combine the gun and the guider, it seems only reasonable that a shooting skill would be created.

I think maybe so I ask Neils.

“Do you, by any chance, have a gun you are planning on throwing away?”

“Why do you ask?”

“I have a situation.”

“The guns I make cannot be given to others or exchanged for karma, you know that?”

“Yes, I saw the explanation.”

A gun that is made by Neils Oslon can only have an owner that its creator, Neils Oslon, chooses.

“You know the muzzle-loading magic rifle? Because of the exam, I have about 10 of those.”

“That would work. It is shameless I realize, but would it be possible if I could have one of them?”

“It doesn’t matter. They’re no use anyway. If you gave it to me I wouldn’t take it.”

Neils summoned a muzzle-loading magic rifle and gave it to me.

‘Nice!’

With all this, coming to Denmark was definitely worth it and then some.

The deal was finished and we shared a meal and drink and shared some stories.

When the drink went in him, Neils spilled all of the life he lived in Arena and he was indeed a person that went through a lot of adversity.

The most ridiculous one was the 7th turn.

‘To go out to the remote land where no one ever goes and take root there, that’s a bit harsh.’

Here, I was able to hear a very important piece of information.

“Did you know why the angel bastards sent me to a no-man’s land for an exam?”

“I’m not sure. Was it not to avoid having your gun making skills influence the society of the Arena residents?”

“There is that. But there was a more important reason.”

Neils drank his beer in a single shot, emptying it and spoke.

“It was to eliminate the errors in the flow of time.”

This was his explanation.

He started his exam at the same time as Odin, but while Odin spent 40 days for his exam, Neils spent 3 years.

In order to eliminate the problem of the time gaps, the angels sent Neils to a place without anybody else around.

That view makes sense. I’ve thought of a similar idea before as well.

If you look at it that way, the reason examinees first start in a place like the outskirts without anyone else around might be because of this conflict of time flow.

Chapter 72

Unlimited (Part 1)

When I got back to the hotel I attempted to use the skill synthesis.

“Muzzle loading magic rifle synthesize with guider.”

-Synthesizing muzzle loading magic rifle with guider (assist skill).

Pat!

-Synthesis successful. You have acquired shooting (synthesis skill).

-The muzzle loading magic rifle will be used.

-Shooting (synthesis skill): In the instance of using firearms, 100% accuracy to target within a determined range.

*Entry level 1: applicable distance range 10 meters

“Nice!”

I rejoiced. It was exactly the skill I wanted.

When I use a firearm for an object within 10 meters, even without Sylph’s help, I can now hit it with 100% accuracy.

Sylph can shoot from a long distance and I can from a closer distance, it’s a double shooting pattern.

Min-jeong had excitedly toured Copenhagen with Hyun-ji, kept a cheerful happy mood and was very passionately cuddling with me.

Thanks to it we spent a sweet night and the next day, with a regretful heart, we loaded ourselves onto a flight to Korea.

“We are on our way.”

Incheon Airport.

Lee Soo-hyun had even prepared a private taxi for us timed to our arrival to the airport.

I felt thankful towards her for taking care of our itinerary down to the last detail and all the way to the end.

“I am very thankful. We owe you a lot.”

“Then you can treat me to a meal sometime.”

“...Huh?”

“Oh, good! I’d love to come too!”

Min-jeong quickly stuck to my side and blocked the gaze.

I can’t tell if Lee soo-hyun is joking or for real or not, but she smiled and then departed.



[Chairman Park Jin-seong’s lightning recovery!]

[Deteriorating health of Chairman Park Jin-seong ‘I have no health issues’]

[Jinseong Electronics’ downhill performance brings a return of Chairman Park Jin-seong, failed attempt at successor?]

[Chairman Park Jin-seong, displays excellent health]

[Jinseong Group affiliates/company/subsidiary value/worth rapid rebound in stocks ‘the return of the king effect’]

[The comeback of Chairman Park Jin-seong ‘we need to be aware that everyone is always on the verge of death’ business management proclamation]

News and papers were all abuzz.

Chairman Park Jin-seong, more than just being healthy, re-appeared with a rejuvenated appearance.

Biggest net worth in the Republic of Korea.

Influence at level 0, this great man.*

(TN: 0 comes before 1? It is supposed to mean he has more influence than anyone.)

In order to reorganize the financial world, the king makes a shocking return.

Competitors' stocks nearly crash completely with the return of Jinseong Electronics leader.

'Incredible.'

Watching the loud news, I couldn't contain my amazement.

The healed chairman Park Jin-seong, as he ate his last flame of life, had said something when he was eating it.

"Jinseong groups declining condition was actually not the fault of my children. The climate was headed in that direction. With smartphones and tablets, all of was too saturated."

"Was it?"

"But as I return to the scene, interestingly as I was getting the spotlight, the anticipation will increase the stock prices."

Chairman Park Jin-seong smiled giddily and talked confidently.

"The increase of stock is temporary, but the atmosphere will change. Originally when you overcome an obstacle, that's how you start it."

"Anyway, congratulations. I guess we won't be seeing each other anymore."

"What are you talking about? You are an examinee that is managed by the Jinseong Group. If you forget that, it complicates things."

“But that is just the official title. Your goal has already been met.”

“My relationship with you will continue. Who is to know that I won’t get sick again?”

“If you’ve lived this long, that should be good enough. Well, are you planning on becoming Jangsu the king? Did you know that Jangsu’s son, the crown prince Joda, was the origin of the word ‘peck’?”

(TN: This guy basically unified Korea. I have no idea about the peck thing he is talking about.)

“You bastard!”

We went back and forth like that when chairman Park Jin-seong said this as we say goodbye.

“If there is anything you need, contact me. As a reward for giving me new life, in a little while, there will be a supplement, you can anticipate it.”

“I have enough money already though, so.”

There is 30 million dollars in my swiss account.

I have become a rich man so suddenly that I hadn’t really gotten used to this new reality.

It could also be because I didn’t know how to use money.

Anyway, after his return, he was showing a storm-like happiness, seeing that made me happy.

Drastically organizing a useless product lineup, aggressively scouting IT and designers and starting promotions, chairman Park Jin-seong looked like he was thoroughly enjoying himself.

He had a serious expression on his face but having hunted and hung out with him for a while now, I think I understand how he must have felt.

The joy of being alive.

The great gratitude he felt for being given another chance at life.

With this new life that Chairman Park Jin-seong had been given, he wasn't wasting a minute nor a second; he was living hard.

Since the top executive was being like that, the workers below him also followed suit and became busy and the whole of Jinseong group became energized.

According to chairman Park Jin-seong's plan, the atmosphere had changed amazingly.

Anyway, due to chairman Park Jin-seong's full recovery, separate from that, my remaining rest period is creeping to an end.

"Oppa, aren't we meeting too much?"

It was the night of the day before the exam.

We had spent the night together at her place when Min-jeong suddenly asked the question.

"You think so?"

We did meet nearly every day.

When the 5th turn exam begins, it is because I didn't know how long I wouldn't be able to see Min-jeong so I wanted to hang out with her a lot in advance.

From Min-jeong's perspective, it could have been a little bit too much.

"Are you annoyed I come over every day?"

"Of course not, oppa. That's not what I meant."

Min-jeong cuddled herself into me.

"I'm just afraid that we are aflame and it will burn out fast. What if you don't go that far and get bored of me?"

"That won't happen. I can promise you that."

“Tsk, like that can be something that can be promised.”

I can definitely promise it.

Soon, tomorrow, I have to spend a long time in the Arena.

And after that, if I do return, I had no doubt that after a long departure, I will be aflame for Min-jeong.

“It’s actually, I heard that you haven’t dated anyone for long periods, that’s what I heard from Min-jeong.”

“Damn, she just spills everything!”

“You do the same too. Let’s not tell Hyun-ji things she doesn’t need to know now, okay?”

Min-jeong chuckled.

“This time, it’s different. I want to be with you for a long, long time.”

“Me too.”

Honestly, I’m not sure.

This relationship... I started it just thinking of it as casual dating.

That even if I were to die, she would be a little sad and then forget it, I wanted it to be a relationship with little affection, like that.

But Min-jeong, unlike her first impression, isn’t the kind of casual girl I thought she was. I opened the lid, unlike the carefree Hyun-ji, she turned out to be the opposite and sincere.

It worried me.

‘No doubt she’ll be sad if I died?’

I looked to Min-jeong and secretly sighed.

There was no other way, I had to survive. No matter what, desperately, persistently, I have to come back.

The next day in the morning, I took Min-jeong to school and I went to work at the mountain lodge.

Nowadays, unlike before, chairman Park Jin-seong doesn't come here every day, but instead he had an employee deliver the things I asked for.

I wondered if he is treating me carelessly now that his business is taken care of.

"Here you go."

"Thank you."

I took the box that chairman Park Jin-seong's 3rd secretariats gave me and load it into my car trunk.

It's a box full of magnum.357 bullets.

I had needed.357 bullets to load into my newly acquired 2 semi-automatic Neils' H2 guns.

I headed straight home and placed the boxes inside the house.

'Now that I think of it, I'll be 30 soon.'

In no time, it had turned to December.

When I come back from my 5th turn exam, Min-jeong and Hyun-ji, they'll be done with their college studies.

Min-jeong, when she graduates, is going to go to work at a relative oppa's company and will have to move to Seoul.

I get the feeling she is already looking for a one room apartment online.

'Should I be independent too?'

I don't think it would be a bad idea to follow Min-jeong to Seoul with her.

I want to move in with her but, having only been dating for a month, I think that's moving too fast. It was just my own wish.

'When I get back, I'll get my own place.'

I have lots of money, shouldn't I just spend some of it?

Thinking though this and that, the time arrived.

"Let's go."

I laid in bed and closed my eyes.

I took deep breaths and braced myself. And then in an instant, I lost consciousness.



"Wake up. How late are you going to lay around and sleep?"

In my ear, I hear a familiar and revolting voice and at that I open my eyes.

I come to and I am laying down.

Flap, flap, the baby angel is flying around and the first thing I see is the baby angel's face and it put me in a bad mood.

"What's this exam?"

I asked.

The baby angel chuckled and laughed.

"This is a very easy exam."

That bastard, as the words easily came out of his mouth, I got an uneasy feeling.

If it was easy, why are you chuckling?

"Board summons."

-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-Class: 10

_Karma: 0

-Mission: Revive the tree of life

-Time limit: unlimited

‘As expected.’

Indeed, the mission is to revive the tree of life.

My decision to invest my karma in the flame of life was good.

But there is a word that is unsettling to me.

“Unlimited?”

“Wow, that’s nice. There is no time limit and without any danger, you can just leisurely spend your days with the elves.”

“Wait, why is it unlimited?”

“Does that upset you?”

“Well, no, it is not that it is upsetting, per se...”

“What are you going to do if you have a time limit? Would that change anything?”

“...no.”

Regardless, there is only one way to revive the tree.

Every day, feed it two flames of life.

There was nothing I can do by trying to rush.

That’s why there was no time limit. There was no point.

...hold on.

‘There’s not point? No way.’

There’s no such thing as not having a point.

This too, has a point/meaning. In an exam, everything is a hint.

A hidden message.

The meaning of this exam.

There is definitely something the gods want from me.

“Is it possible that this will take longer than a year?”

“There are people who spend 6 years in an exam. What crime is a year?”

“...”

I recall Neils and shuddered.

“It is not like spending time in that world ages you so it doesn’t matter. Oh, but you’ll be lonely every night, is that it? Hehehe.”

I wanted to shoot that bastard with my gun.

“Now now, don’t harbor animosity towards me, be on your way.”

The exam door appeared before me.

I sighed and opened the door and enter.

A bright light swallowed me.



“Hyung, wake up! How long are you going to sleep?”

“The sun is already midday, you think we’ll leave you to sleep?”

“We won’t allow this, humph.”

Playfulness incarnate, these heartless child elves have invaded my tent and surrounded me.

I got dragged by the children to the outside and I saw a scene, children and women playing.

The girl elves are playing the gong-gi I taught them, and the more I watch, the level is amazing.

They have 10 gong-gi in each hand, playing both hands at the same time!

‘Do all elves originally have good reflexes?’

I summon Sylph and Kasa and got away from the kids and headed towards the tree of life.

Underneath the tree of life, the mothers were gathered.

“Have you come? Today you are late.”

I bowed my head.

“Yes, I am sorry.”

“No need. We ask of you again today.”

“Yes. How is the state of the tree of life? Is it effective?”

The eldest mother nodded her head with a happy face.

“We inspected carefully and there is minute, but definite, progress. At this rate, the tree of life will be completely revived within 10 years.”

10 years?!

I shivered.

‘It’s not like spending time there ages you, so it doesn’t matter, no? Is it because you

will be lonely every night? Hehehe.'

The bundegi bastard's words lingered like an alarm in my ear.

"It, it won't take that long!"

Surely.

Chapter 73

Unlimited (Part 2)

My flame of life skill was intermediate level 1. And that's because I aggressively poured 1300 karma into it.

'Thank goodness. What a relief!'

I was thankful to myself for making an impressive decision.

I could have spent 10 years living alone. In that time, that's a long enough period that, who knows, I could have forgotten Min-jeong's face.

"Should I have just used 1800 karma and raised it to intermediate level 2?"

Anyhow, the exam itself didn't pose much difficulty.

I created a flame of life and blew it into the Tree of Life.

'One more time.'

I made another flame of life and blew it into the tree.

Suh-luh-look-

As the flame seeped in, it felt as if energy was returning to the Tree of Life. Or it could just be a feeling.

Would they have attached the word 'unlimited' to the task if all it took was these two flames to visibly improve it?

'What is the intent? Why is it unlimited?'

I thought it over thoroughly.

In the previous 4th exam, I spent 30 days here and cleared the exam.

Aside from taking time, it was an easy exam. To top that, spending time with the Tree of Life also increased my spirit summons level.

‘Ah...!’

I finally came to a realization.

This exam is giving me a chance to grow and develop.

If you spent a long time here, the longer you spend, the spirit summons level increases.

I was now on the 5th turn and having lost all my comrades, this is a precious chance to increase my capabilities.

‘Good, this is a good opportunity, I’ll use it well.’

I made a firm promise to myself.

No matter how long it takes, I’ll take it, and make a whirlwind growth.

Of course, I’ll be lonely because I can’t see my family and Min-jeong, but I’ll endure and get through it.

As long as I clear the exam I can see them again so there was no need to feel impatient.

I went to the mothers and made one request.

“While I am here, would it be okay to stay by the Tree of Life?”

“By the Tree of Life?”

“Yes. I wish to spend 24 hours a day with the Tree of Life.”

The mothers happily approved it.

“We don’t mind at all. You are our family so it is good no matter how long you wish to spend with the tree.”

“It is good to see that you feel attached with the Tree of Life.”

“Thank you.”

From that day onwards, I started to spend every day with the Tree of Life.

Meals of course, and sleeping too, I did it on top the Tree of Life.

The closer I am to the Tree of Life, the more it increases the spirit summons. I’m using it to the max effect.

Thanks to the reflex entry level 3, spending time atop the tree isn’t difficult.

I’ve got good jumping ability, I can easily hop up and I’ve got good balance too.

After I spent a week like that, the tree felt like a flatland.

“Human oppa is weird.”

“He won’t come down from there.”

“I bet even the red apes don’t like the tops of trees as much as that oppa.”

“He’s like a monkey.”

The young elves looked at me not coming down from the Tree of Life and started a fire of chatter.

But one young girl elf stuck herself to the tree and started to climb up it.

If it was a normal young girl, it would have been impossible, but perhaps its because she is an elf, she bravely made it to where I am.

The young girl elf is none other than Elise.

Nearly abducted by despicable humans, she is the girl who once suffered from anxiety.

“Hehe.”

Elise looked at me and laughed coyly. Aww, so cute.

I want to have her as my daughter but then her unni, Ellie, probably wouldn’t let that

happen?

“Hi?”

“Hehe, hi.”

“Isn’t it nice here?”

“Mm, yeah.”

“You want to go up even higher?”

“Uh huh!”

We climbed up the tree together.

The Tree of Life has grown to the sky and the climbing was endless.

If we grasped a wrong limb I could summon Sylph to catch us so there was no danger of us injuring ourselves either.

As we start to go up together, beneath us on the ground the young elves began to rumble.

“What is it? Human hyung and Elise have started going up together!”

“It must be good up there.”

“You think they’re competing to see who can get up higher?”

“I want to go up too!”

“Huh? Me too!”

Is this mob mentality?

The young elves were engulfed in playing now and they all started to climb up the Tree of Life.

I worry that perhaps I have encouraged a useless and dangerous thing to the kids but

that was an unfounded security.

“Hohoho, the kids are playing well.”

“When we were young, we played a lot on the Tree of Life too.”

“The more time you spend with the Tree of Life, the more we received good energy from Mother Nature so it is good.”

The mothers looked happy.

I surely cannot look at elves with the same point of view as humans.

I don't think they ever worry about things like falling.

Then again, they've got spirits so they probably don't worry about that. In addition, elves, on a basic level, are more athletic and physically capable than humans.

But the young elves who have followed me up seems to have gotten bored.

“Hyung, now what?”

“Teach us something fun.”

“Yea, yea.”

“If you brought us all the way up here, be responsible for that.”

I was becoming scared of these little kids.

I pondered while in a cold sweat and finally thought of an idea.

Fine.

It was time to show a new game to these elves.

“Let's play tag.”

“What's that?”

“What?”

“Tag what?”

The kids gathered round like a hive of bees and I explained to them the rules of tag.

“If you get caught by the person who is the tagger, that tagged person becomes the new tagger.”

“If you’ve been caught, can you escape?”

“No, if your body is touched by the tagger, you become the next tagger.”

“Then you just need to go far?”

“Let’s say we cannot get off this tree, and we also can’t go up too high either.”

First of all, I become the tagger to show them how it is done.

“I’m going!”

“Kyak!”

“Run away!”

“Hyung’s coming!”

“We can’t get caught!”

The young elves screamed and scatter. Among them, I targeted one girl.

“Kyak!”

The elf girl let out a petrified scream and scrams. She’s scared but her face is laughing.

I moved left and right and trapped the elf girl at the end of a tree branch

The elf girl was cornered when she jumped down.

“What?!”

I'm startled but the elf girl summoned Sylph and rode the wind to a different spot.

"...let's decide on no spirit summons. If you summon a spirit, you become the tagger."

"Okay!"

"Got it!"

"This is fun!"

The young elves were excited.

I didn't particularly have anything else to do and this became exercise so it all works out.

The kids have the elf's outstanding athleticism and being familiar with the tree, they are agile.

But still, they were kids.

Thanks to my athleticism entry level 3, I easily caught an elf boy.

"Darn, now I'm the tagger!"

"Haha, Rick is the tagger!"

"Don't get caught!"

The game of tag is a rage.

It is a game but the very militant game of tag catches the eyes of the adults.

At first, they looked pleased that I was playing so well with the kids, but slowly, their eyes changed.

"I think we could use that as training?"

"It makes for very good exercise."

"If they climb trees well, that is beneficial to battle too."

The grown-up elf men join in in the game of tag frenzy.

They, at an arranged time every day, gather together and play tag like its training. Of course, at a higher point the adults play themselves.

The kids watch them with me and play from lower on the tree.

‘That part is interesting.’

The top of the Tree of Life.

With a crazy like speed, as the elf men were all playing tag, I watched them and I could not stop my shock.

Their speed was too fast!

Somersaults and handsprings after that, from a skinny sprig they delicately found their balance. Is that human? Or, right, not human.

I am a full-grown adult and I still cannot follow them so I have to hang out with the kids.

But the kids too have gone crazy with this game of tag and have shown immense growth.

They quickly got the knack for it and they climbed well like squirrels.

“Hehehe, try getting me!”

“No, try me!”

From all directions, little kids like monsters taunt me. Now, catching them is becoming more and more difficult.

‘Ugh, let’s just think of this as training.’

As me being it becomes an increasingly frequent occurrence, the fitness intermediate level 1 reached its limit and I became exhausted and panted; this happens more and more.

Not only that, the well-behaved Elise too jumped to a tree opposite and escaped my chase and I felt betrayed.

Although unni Ellie and her lover Jake are happy that Elise has become brighter.

‘There’s no way my fitness is lagging. It must be the difference in stamina.’

I am at Kang Chun-seong’s level of fitness: intermediate level 1.

Could it be possible that Kang Chun-seong’s fitness lagged behind that of kid elves?

I think the problem is the balance that it takes to be on these branches.

But for ten days I continued to treat the Tree of Life and repeatedly played tag.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): knowing how to move your body.

*entry level 4

My fatigue completely disappears and instead, a thrilling ecstasy.

‘My reflex level climbed!’

Staying in the elf village, the skills I can grow were not just the spirit summons.

A simple problem.

Having mastered martial arts all his life, Kang Chun-seong, from the beginning, had an unbelievable level of skill.

Through training, I too can increase my skill level.

Not on flat ground but atop an unfamiliar Tree of Life, living 24 hours a day here, with intense games of tag, I improved my balance.

So it’s not strange at all that that increased my reflex level.

‘I’ll do it like this!’

The spirit summons for sure, the reflex and fitness skills, I decided to increase them.

Its training I do as play so even if it was hard, it was fun too.

“Human oppa suddenly got faster!”

“Hing, we won’t be able to catch him!”

“Hyun, your body movements suddenly seem weird! It’s suspicious!”

Thanks to the reflex level going up, I get caught less in tag.

It became a hell of a lot easier balancing and moving on top of the tree.

Once I take a big jump, I shake both my arms while in the air and adjust my balance as I descend, and landed on a branch 10 meters away.

That incredible acrobatics, succeeding in it, it awakened me. Surpassing my previous level, grand movements are possible.

From then on, I don’t get caught in tag by the kid elves anymore.

And then on the 20th day of the 5th exam.

-Spirit summons (main skill): summon a spirit and display strength from mother nature.

*Spirits possible for summon: Sylph, Kasa

*Entry level 3: summon time 2 hours 30 minutes

“Hahahaha!”

The fruits of eating, sleeping, and playing on the Tree of Life. Spirit summons leveled up in 20 days!

‘Just keep going like this.’

I decided to change the taggers up to two people and changed the difficulty level of the game.

The kids’ tag skills instantly improved again, and having seen this from above, the elf

men just go ahead with 3 taggers.

“Doing this makes the training more effective.”

“You have to know who the tagger is so it trains the memory and decision making too.”

“He is definitely a human worth of the mothers accepting him as family.”

“Is that human a genius?”

The compliments about me are great.

The greatest worry for me is that the Tree of Life’s recovery is obvious, I have become someone who cannot be absent from this village.

“Now.”

The incarnate being of temper, Ella, brings us snacks to eat. Apples and strawberries, grapes, and dried things too.

“Thanks to you, Elise has become much better.”

“Oh, thank you.”

If Ella is thanking me, I think I can say all the elves like me.

Chapter 74

Explosive Growth (Part 1)

The 42nd day.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): develop the ability to move your body more efficiently.

*Entry level 5

As two taggers cornered me in battle hunting style, I superbly escaped.

As I did so, the children exploded in a cacophony.

“What, that human hyung is too good!”

“Hmph, I can’t catch him at all!”

“Don’t be cheap and play with us kids, go play up there!”

“Such foul play, to be playing with the kids!”

It wasn’t long ago when they provoked my slow reflexes, you bastards!

Having become a cheap shot adult who took advantage of winning over children, I had no choice but to move on up where the monsters swarmed.

“Huh? What’s going on, Kim?”

Jake showed interest. We had become close enough that I had moved from being called ‘human’ to ‘Kim.’

The upper parts of the Tree of Life.

If one were to fall from this height, I don’t think the bones could be reset!

Here is the adult elves’ game of tag training grounds.

The game of tag which popularized as a game, the elf men sublimated it, and perhaps that looked like good fun because the women elves participated now too.

“The kids told me to come play up here. Hmph, they used to stick to me and beg to hang out before.”

“You had some difficulty with your balance in the beginning but since then, you seem to have become familiar with it. Considering you’re a human, you’re quite good.”

“Really?”

“Our domain has been invaded by humans several times but I have never seen a human with a sense of balance as great as yours.”

“That’s a joyous compliment. Thanks.”

“Even though in the end you’re still just a human.”

“ .. ”

“There is nothing one can do about the limits one is born with so do not despair too much.”

“I haven’t despaired yet. I haven’t even started!”

“Try to develop it then. If your opponent were to be a woman, then it might be feasible.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, a male elf ran towards us. He must be it.

“Good luck.”

Pat!

Jake flung his body away and avoided the tagger.

The male elf paused momentarily and then set his gaze upon me.

His gaze was asking if I was playing with them too.

I nodded my head.

The elf man smiled, when...

Pat-

He closed the distance in an instant. Just the starting point of the adults was far different from the children.



Playing with grown up elves, this really isn't a game but just pure training.

I had to be the tagger for the mostly the entirety of the game.

But suffering that way, my physical strength buff skill jumped to intermediate level 2. Using all my might to try and catch up to the elves, even without catching up, my skills that passed human levels, rose even more.

It was a fruitful time.

Four months since starting the exam, the Tree of Life now showed a definite recovery.

Even to my own eyes, the Tree of Life showed more vitality.

The ever few sparse and dry leaves were no longer seen but now they were all fresh and green.

"At this rate, within 2 months, the Tree of Life might make a complete recovery."

At what the eldest mother said, I could not feel any discord.

During the past four months, I had achieved an incredible amount of growth.

-Spirit summons (main skill): summon a spirit and enlist the aid of nature

*Possible summon spirits: Sylph, Kasa

*Entry level 4: summon time 2 hours 45 minutes

-Reflex (synthesis skill): develop the ability to move your body more efficiently.

*entry level 5

-Physical Strength Buff (assist skill): strengthens the body

*Intermediate level 2: gain the physicality of an adult woman elf

Look. This great growth.

Of course, it was the result of working hard for 4 months, but without using karma this amount of skill growth was a great benefit.

‘Just a while longer.’

I wanted to clear the mission quickly and go home. I missed my family and I missed Min-jeong too.

Lately at night, I got these thoughts and I overcame them with exercise!

But I couldn’t lose an opportunity like this.

Without the danger of losing my life, growing my abilities, this good of an opportunity, how can I just let it pass me by?

After some pondering, I shared my thoughts with the mothers.

“How about this?”

“...?”

“As you all well know, I can make two flames of life every day. Now, the Tree of Life has recovered substantially, so I will give it one flame a day, and we can use the other flame for other things.”

“Perhaps another tree, you mean another tree that has the potential to become a Tree of Life.”

“Indeed. In this situation where this Tree of Life survives and another Tree of Life were to be born, would it not be of great help to the elves?”

“That is true indeed!”

“If the brown mountain has two Trees of Life, then the prosperity of our elf clan will begin.”

“Suffering elves from other areas will come.”

“The brown mountain will become the elves’ oasis!”

“We shall do this!”

“We will have two Trees of Life!”

“If that happens, we won’t have to worry about anything.”

The mothers’ reactions were explosive.

“Is it really that big of a profit to have two Trees of Life?”

“It is. The Tree of Life is our elves’ foundation of power or so you could say. The energy of mother nature the more it emanates, the stronger we become.”

“Then in that case, how about we do what I proposed?”

“If you would, we would be beyond grateful.”

Thus, it was decided that a flame of life would be used towards growing a different tree.

“Are you Kim?”

A middle-elf couple approached me.

With a few wrinkles, the middle-aged elf man had stately looking face. If he was on earth, it would be more than just a few girls who would go crazy over him.

“I am Derrick.”

The middle-aged elf Derrick is actually the oldest elves in this elf village.

“Hoho, Kim, is this the first time you’ve seen my husband?”

He was the eldest mother's husband.

It would be easy to see how he would be the top dog amongst the male elves.

"I apologize for not showing my face sooner. Facing a human was uncomfortable so it is true that I have avoided you thus far."

"You must have a bad memory with humans?"

"We can call it a large-scale invasion. We did fight and win but it was an injurious victory. Well, it was 240 years ago."

"Now now, I said to forget that now."

The eldest mother's voice became surprisingly soft.

Indeed, when dealing with her own husband, instead of charisma, she showed aegyo.

Seeing the awesomely aged couples' affection, I was full of jealousy. I wanted to be like that with too with Min-jeong...

Derrick put out his hand.

"You are our savior and family so I shall forget that uncomfortableness."

"Thank you."

I shook hands with Derrick. His hand was full of calloused skin. It was a warrior's hand. He was a man with a great charisma.

'I want to be like him.'

I felt a bromance for this handsome middle aged charismatic elf, Derrick.

"Going forward, I will come every morning to get the flame of life. With that, I will go to the brown mountain, southwest to the pine tree to promote its growth myself."

"Soutwest?"

"It is a distance about 5 km from here."

I was completely surprised, 5 km. In this harsh terrain, 5 km is a considerable distance. He was going to go and return that every day?

“Is that how you’ve done it straight thus far?”

“Because it is a precious tree that could be our future.”

“Thanks to your sacrifice, we are strong.”

The eldest mother showed aegyo next to her husband. Derrick stroked her hair.

Kuk, he’s so cool.

He is a man among men.

I have fallen head over heels for Derrick’s charisma.

“Excuse me, but would it be possible to go with you every morning?”

“It should be quite a long distance for a human?”

“I don’t really have anything else to do in the mornings. It’ll be exercise too.”

“Doesn’t matter. You’ll have to try hard and keep up.”

“Yes!”

Derrick pat me on the shoulder and went on his way.

‘Kuk, he is so cool!’

The eldest mother, who saw off Derrick, returned to me proudly.

“Isn’t he wonderful?”

“Yes, I think I might fall for him.”

Perhaps she misunderstood me but the eldest mother started looking at me with wary eyes.



In the morning, a 5-km run with Derrick to the tree, there and back.

In the afternoon, tag training with the young elves.

My schedule sorted itself out that way.

“Faster.”

Said Derrick from on up ahead.

I gritted my teeth and increased my speed. I barely kept pace and when we arrived, I was out of breath.

“It’s this rascal.”

Derrick looked with attentive eyes towards a pine tree in front of him.

I was told it was still a young Tree of Life so I had imagined a small sapling.

But in reality, actually seeing it...

‘If this was my world this would definitely be considered a sacred tree.’

Its length was a full 30 m and still growing.

If the Tree of Life were a great tower, this one is a great column.

“This is the third most precious thing we must protect.”

“What are the first and second things?”

“The second is our own Tree of Life. The first is our village children.”

“Ah...”

I think I’m falling for him!

I stared off at Derricks dignified face. If the eldest mother saw me doing this she would

have been much warier of me.

“Hurry and do your business and leave. This place is dangerous.”

“Is dangerous?”

“Lots of monsters come this way often.”

“...”

“Humans from the north and lycanthropes from the east, they have been making a ruckus lately but there, there are plenty of young folk. The real dangerous place is here.”

“What kind of monsters are there?”

“The undead.”

“Excuse me?”

“Dead things that have been forced alive but are neither alive nor dead. Those kinds of monsters.”

“Uhh there are things like that?”

“You’re a human and you don’t know? That’s very interesting.”

Derrick looked at me baffled and continued to speak.

“Those that do that kind of thing are humans that practice black magic. The attack 240 years ago was like that too, so there is no way that I can like humans you see.”

“...”

“Of course, you’re the exception.”

Derrick patted me on the shoulder and I felt moved. I’m definitely falling for him!

No matter, zombie movie I had seen, those kinds of monsters, I had no idea they would really exist.

“So then even if you kill the undead, they don’t die?”

“Not so.”

Said Derrick.

“You can go after the black majeong.”

Black majeong?

Now that I think of it, they said in this place, in Arena, monsters and humans, concentrated mana in the form of majeong, resides in the bodies.

It seems the black majeong from the undead serves a similar role to that majeong.

“With black magic, making artificial majeong to revive a dead corpse and making it move. You just have to break that. It is usually in the head.”

Derrick hit me on the back.

“Go now. The bastards do not choose night or day and attack at any time.”

I spoke.

“I want to fight too.”

“You cannot.”

Derrick quickly cut me off and spoke.

“You are a precious one to us. Leave the dangerous things up to the rest of us.”

“I won’t act recklessly. I wish to check how much stronger I have become.”

“This is no place for checking.”

The skill level I’ve raised while spending my time atop the Tree of Life and playing tag.

And the two guns I received from the gun maker Neilson Aslan.

I want to see and compare through battle how much stronger I had become since the last exam.

“Would you throw a rock for me?”

I picked up a rock and handed it to Derrick.

“Where to?”

“Anywhere.”

As I said it, I summoned one Neilson H2 and gripped it in my right hand.

Derrick stared at my gun suspiciously then threw the rock to the front.

The moment it was thrown, I shot the gun.

Tang-bagak!

Before the rock made it past my head, it shattered into pieces.

The shooting skill that has 100% accuracy within 10 m, this was the perfect time to test it out.

Derrick’s two eyes were wide open.

Chapter 75

Explosive Growth (Part 2)

“How did you do that?”

“I shot at it.”

“What weapon is that?”

Derrick showed interest in my Neilson H2.

“It is a weapon called a gun. A small pellet shoots out at the target.”

“I thought I saw something kind of fly by. I thought I saw wrong but I guess not.”

Wait, this guy, did he just say he saw a flying bullet?

Rather, I should be the alarmed one.

A bullet that whizzes by faster than the speed of sound, he reflexively saw it, that's some beastlike vision.

“Do humans use those kinds of weapons nowadays?”

“No. This is a weapon that only I have. You see, there is only one person who can make this.”

“That is a relief. If humans were to all use that kind of weapon, that would be too much of a threat to us.”

“I don't think you have to worry about such. But, what do you think? With this much, don't you think I can partake in the fighting?”

“Hmm...”

“If it becomes dangerous, I'll remove myself immediately and run for it.”

“Then fine. On one condition.”

“What is it?”

“Do not be apart from me for even a moment.”

“Huk!”

“Mm? What is it?”

“Oh, it’s nothing. I’ll do as you say.”

That stately charisma, please stop. I really think I’ll fall for you!

At this rate, I really may become the eldest mother’s love rival.

At Derrick’s suggestion that I return for the day, I came back to the village.

During the afternoon game of tag training, I bragged about this to Jake.

“With Derrick ajusshi?!”

“Yep.”

“No way!”

“What’s the big deal?”

“Derrick ajusshi is our hero! Everyone wants to battle with Derrick ajusshi!”

Jake was ablaze with jealousy.

Ah, the eldest mothers’ rivals in love number many. Derrick really is a devil man.

“We want to fight the undead with the ajusshis in the southwest area too. The ajusshis said no which is why we have the safe northeast side.”

“They’re worried because it is dangerous.”

“Then why is it that he takes you to that dangerous place!”

“That’s right!”

“Is he discriminating against us!”

Huh?

Suddenly, I’m surrounded by elf men.

“Shouldn’t this be discussed?”

“He can’t think we’re weaker than Kim?”

“No way!”

I really hoped that the elf village didn’t come into discord because of me?

I was tense like this when.

“Oh, by the way, Kim, you’re it.”

A guy tapped me on the back.

The guys scattered like arrows. My face became terribly distorted.

That evening, Derrick and several other older elves returned, and the young male elves gathered round them.

“What is it.”

Derrick’s face was showing suspicion.

“Ajusshi, we can fight the undead too.”

“Why do you not allow us but allow Kim?”

“We’re confident too!”

The girl elves and mothers wondered what was going on and started to gather around too.

Having caught everyone's attention, Derrick open his mouth.

"The reason I gave permission to Kim to fight with us is because it is a part of his training. Under my guidance, he will grow his fighting sense."

Derrick looked straight on at the male elves and continued to speak.

"What do you think. Do you too need my guidance? I believe you guys to be trustworthy and respectable warriors."

"..."

"..."

The young elves have nothing to say.

"I request of you, as I always have, to remain in the northeast."

Then Derrick leisurely passed through and by the young elves.

The now solemn young elves scattered and I was moved with emotion. Why are you so cool, Mr. Derrick!



Starting the next day, I moved with Derrick.

First of all, I blew a flame of life into the village's Tree of Life, and then gave another to the pine tree that Derrick and I had arrived at.

"From now on, you will have to be careful."

"Yes, sir."

I summoned my two guns and moved on with Derrick.

We kept heading in the southwest direction.

Then, when we had arrived at some cliff, we could see some other elves.

“Is that you, Derrick?”

“Ah.”

Based on their appearance, middle aged looking elves greeted him. I’m sure they are all actually over 200 years old.

16 older elf men were lined up along the cliff.

“Has it started?”

Asked Derrick.

“It has, they haven’t let up today either, they keep climbing.”

At those words, I looked below the cliff.

‘Huk!’

It was like a scene from a horror movie.

Here and there, corpses were tenaciously climbing up the cliff.

They were human corpses.

“Kululuk!”

“Kuuuuh!”

“Uhahhhh!”

The yelling zombies.

As if they were deeply craving something. The zombies were climbing up the cliff, headed this way.

“The undead are neither a living nor a dead existence. They have the black majeong so they live and move, but they have no life.”

Explained Derrick, who had approached me.

“The way a starved man searches for food, these bastards are greedy for the life they lack. They are jealous of and greedy of all those who have life.”

At his words, a thought crossed my mind.

“The Tree of Life!”

“Yes. The bastards instinctively come here for their search of the most ample life force.”

“...”

“Then let’s begin.”

Derrick lifted his bow and took out his arrow and demonstrated.

The other elves, likewise, began to shoot the zombies with their arrows.

Swiswiswik-

The arrows flew and shot the zombies one at a time. The zombies who had been hit in the head crashed to the ground along with the zombies who were trailing underneath them.

I couldn’t just stand there.

First, I put away my guns and summoned the Mosin-Nagant.

“Sylph.”

-Meow?

“Shoot those things.”

Sylph nodded her head and then lifted the Mosin-Nagant and aimed. She took the bullet I handed to her and loaded, then began to shoot.

Tang, tang! Tang, tang!

“Kekk!”

“Kawk!”

With every shot, the zombies crashed.

“You use an interesting weapon.”

“Is that that thing you called a gun?”

“It is indeed a scary weapon.”

“Thank goodness no other human but him has it.”

The elves that had been shooting with me showed a momentary interest in me and Sylph but then refocused their attentions on the fight.

But doesn't this seem too easy?

I just had to shoot the zombies before they made their way to the top?

...is what I thought but I was thinking foolishly.

Derrick put his bow back on his back and spoke.

“Time for us to really get started.”

“Huh? Start what?”

“How many do you think there are that we can keep shooting? Doing that would only be a waste of our arrows.”

“Then...?”

“You shall see.”

From the sheath belt around his hips, he drew two swords.

They were very light and slender swords.

Derrick held one in each hand...

“What?!”

I was completely shocked. That was because Derrick jumped down the cliff!

Making a perfect landing below, Derrick spun round and round in circles.

The two swords that were spinning with him were like a whirlwind, hitting all the zombies clinging to the cliff.

Chwajajajachwak!

Dozens of zombies rained down in an instant, Derrick hung from the cliffside with his sword stabbed into its side.

He pulled his sword out and at the same time, stepped on a protruding rock and began to climb up.

Scarily wielding a sword in each hand and using just his two feet to climb up the cliffside, Derrick's acrobatics!

Chwa-chwa-ch-w-a-k!

“Kuak!”

“Ahhh!”

“Kuruk!”

‘Dear Derrick!’

Even his swordsmanship was the epitome of male romance!

“Whew, there's no way at all that I can copy that.”

“Fighting with double swords off a cliffside can only be done by Derrick.”

“Let's start too.”

The elves, one by one, pulled out their swords. Different from Derrick, they all had one sword each.

Then they all jumped at once.

Chwachwachwak-

Chwachwak!

“Kururkuk!”

“Kuah!”

“Aghh!”

At the elves’ blow, the zombies rained down.

They clung to the cliff with one hand and held their swords in the other and, as if pulling weeds, cut down the zombies.

-Meow.

I was left all alone on top of the cliff with Sylph, staring blankly at the scene below.

“I, uh, have my pride.”

-Meow?

“I’m not who I used to be. I mean, my physical strength buff is intermediate level 5.”

-Meow.....

Sylph had an expression of telling me not to overdo myself.

Despite that, I pulled out my double guns. Right, the goal is to do it like Derrick.

“Kim, you come with Sylph!”

“...okay.”

Hmph.

I unsummoned the Mosin-Nagant and spoke to Sylph.

“If it looks like I am losing my balance and about to fall, catch me.”

-Meow.

Sylph nodded her head.

For now, I decided to use one gun. With the other hand, I grabbed the crevices and began to make my way down.

Paat, pat!

Using easy and grippable points, I climbed down.

The fruits of my labor from playing tag on the Tree of Life. Who knew that that game would have made the perfect training for this!

To a zombie that had come close, I aimed my gun and pulled the trigger.

“Kuak!”

Its head exploded and the zombie fell. With the zombies trailing behind it, it got tangled and, seeing that, I got a sharp delight. One shot, two kills!

“You did well.”

Without my knowledge, Derrick was beside me and gave me a compliment.

Ah, happiness.

Like a child getting complimented by his mother, I was uplifted and fought even harder.

I’m not just using the gun.

I kicked with my feet and grabbed ankles with my hand and pulled, I concentrated on dropping zombies.

During games of tag, it wasn’t just using hands. Rather, it was more often that you would hang from a limb with both hands and tag with the feet.

That effect was being shown now.

‘Should I go for it?’

I summoned another gun and held it in the other hand.

I took a deep breath and began to run along the cliffside.

“Uh la cha!”

As if I was attached to a wire, I raced down the cliffside and recklessly shot my guns.

Ta ta ta tang!

It looked like I was just aimlessly shooting, but thanks to the sense from the shooting skill, I shot four zombies accurately.

Having shot four consecutively, I eventually lost my balance and fell, and Sylph grabbed me.

“Okay, thank you.”

-Meow.

I, again, safely clung to the cliffside.

“You are doing well. If you keep practicing like that you will be able to do as I do.”

With his compliment, this time, Derrick began to chase.

Racing alongside the cliff, Derrick crazily swung his swords.

Every time he swung his sword, it would seem like it had an influence on his balance but it also seemed impossible how he did that without falling.

Derrick stabbed the cliff with his sword in his left hand and while maintaining his position, he haphazardly swung the sword in his right hand and dropped the five zombies around him.

‘I want to be like that someday.’

Even without Sylph's help, there will be a day when I can move freely along a cliffside as if it was flat ground.

I tried out lots of battle techniques.

Shooting with double guns felt good but it did seem like a waste of bullets.

The best thing was the Divine Protection of the Wind.

I kicked off with all my might with both feet and used the wind to push away the zombies, that fighting style was the best.

When the Divine Protection of the Wind was used up after 15 minutes, I used both hands to grab the cliff and kicked with both feet.

Pat!

"Kuak!"

Pa pa pat!

"Kururuk!"

"Gguhu!"

The wind pressure coming from my feet dropped the zombies.

I think altogether, we got 1000 zombies.

After the fighting, we rested and the elves complimented me.

"You were quite good."

"You kept very good balance along the cliffside, it wasn't like a human."

"A human cannot use his full power if his feet aren't planted on the ground, but Kim, you are different."

I replied that it was the results of playing tag and Derrick nodded his head.

“Is that so. I saw that many were working hard with that. It might not be a bad idea to give the opportunity to the young ones.”

It was news that would make Jake very happy.

Chapter 76

Explosive Growth (Part 3)

Every morning, I fought against the zombies with Derrick and his group. Then, I would spend the afternoon atop the Tree of Life.

Even the time spent stuck next to the tree was very precious.

I had to be by the Tree of Life for the spirit summons to grow.

It was time very well spent.

Since the skill levels just kept climbing.

Being able to feel safe and secure while using just my feet to run along a cliffside that has no footholds while fighting takes a lot of athletic skill.

It also requires immense amount of stamina.

After my body surpassed that of human limits I thought there wouldn't be any situation where my body would get tired but that wasn't the case.

Compared to the male elves, I still had a long way to go.

When the Tree of Life was nearly cured, I switched up the flame of life allocation.

"I will allocate one flame to the Tree of Life every other day. 3 every 2 days will be given to the small tree."

"Do as you wish."

Using this opportunity to grow, I planned on dragging it out as long as possible.

Because of that, I purposely chose to postpone clearing the mission.

Because of that, the pine tree with the potential of being another Tree of Life grew

well.

And yet, compared to the Tree of Life, the pine tree was incredibly small, but as it received load after load of the flames of life, its growth rate almost became visible to the eye.

Just like that, time flew by and I reached the 12th month.

Now I gave a flame of life to the Tree of Life every 4 days and all the rest was all poured into the pine tree.

The desire to hurry up and get back home was intense, but I held out.

“Now it is done.”

Derrick looked at the pine tree and was very satisfied.

“Now, not only does it possess the potential but it can definitely grow into a Tree of Life.”

“What does that mean?”

“Just because one has potential, does not mean anyone with that potential can use it. There are more people who do not realize their own potential. Whether human or elf.”

“That is true indeed.”

“But this tree has now realized its own potential. It has definitely grabbed its direction on the path to growing into a Tree of Life.

“Then...?”

“Even if we leave it like this, it will become a Tree of Life. No, actually, I guess I can say that it has already become a Tree of Life. Since growing is just a matter of time.”

“That is great!”

“It is all thanks to you. Thanks to the rich life force you gave it, the tree has become stronger and is creating the energy of nature all on its own.”

“It was nothing.”

I was ecstatic at Derrick’s compliment.

“The more I see you, the more impressive of a human I think you are. Not only this tree, but you yourself have experienced a fierce growth in such a short time. Now when I compare you to the young lads, you don’t come up short.”

“Hehe.”

It has already been 12 months.

In all that time, I worked hard and I wasn’t lazy once.

The spirit summons rose to an entry level 6, and the summons time grew to 3 hours and 15 minutes.

The Reflex skill grew to intermediate level 1. When it went from entry level 5 to intermediate, the effect was completely different.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): know how to move your body well

*Intermediate level 1: In all actions requiring body movement, gain genius level abilities.

Look at that new entry! The abilities of a genius it says.

Before that was just good reflexes and knowing how to move my body but now, it was on the same level of a genius.*

(TN: The best explanation I can come up with for genius levels of athleticism is to imagine Neji or Sasuke...)

Because of it, when I was fighting, now and again I displayed amazing athleticism so much so that some of the elves would stare in awe.

On top of that, the physical strength buff!

-Physical Strength Buff (assist skill): strengthens the body

*Intermediate level 3: Fitness level of an adult elf male

Finally, I have the fitness and stamina of an adult male elf.

‘I’ve really made incredible growth.’

After growing this much, the growth slowed.

The job of fighting zombies along a cliff, or playing a game of tag with the elves, I didn’t feel like it was hard anymore.

Of course if I kept moving with intensity my stamina didn’t last but when it came to technique, I didn’t feel I was lacking.

The spirit summons stopped at entry level 6 and stayed that way for 3 months.

‘Now, let’s clear the mission and go home.’

After deciding that, I revealed my thoughts to the mothers.

“I will now complete the healing of the Tree of Life.”

“Do so.”

The mothers, in matters related to the Tree of Life, entrusted it to me.

For the next few days, I put all of my flames of life into the Tree of Life in the village.

Just like that, 5 days passed.

Pat!

The mission door appeared before my eyes.

‘So, it was done.’

I gently pressed my lips to the Tree of Life.’

‘Thank you. For helping me grow.’

I opened the exam door and left.



Bboo-bboo-bboo-

“Congratulations! Congratulations! Great upgrade!”

“Ah, so loud.”

I said it was loud and the baby angel blew his horn more boisterously.

I took out a gun and shot at him once before he finally stopped. Pfft, it was within the 100% accuracy range, how did he dodge it?

“Were you really going to kill me?”

“You were within 10m, how did it not hit you.”

“Because I am a holy angel.”

“Can you say holy through that bbundegi of yours?”

“Now now, enough about that, aren’t you curious about your exam results?”

“I am. Board retrieval.”

-Name: Hyun-ho Kim

-Class: 16

-Karma: +3,600

-Mission: Rest until the next exam

-Time limits: 60 days

“Wow!”

Without realizing it, I was blown away.

“Didn’t you think your growth as of late was crazy?”

“Hold on, my class was a 10 before wasn’t it? How did I jump 6 levels?”

“It is a combination of your exam score and the growth you made.”

It seemed the skills I raised for the past 12 months were factored into it.

Not only that, but also 3,600 karma!

I wondered if this is a dream.

“Getting 3,600 karma in one exam, is this normal?”

“For a fifth exam, it’s a ridiculously abnormal result. It means examinee Hyun-ho Kim made that much of an impact.”

“Hahaha...”

That part was true.

Reviving the elves’ precious Tree of Life was a big role.

Two trees of life!

That contribution was put towards the karma.

“Accounting for how long the exam was, you have been given an appropriate rest period. Please care to rest thoroughly.”

“Okay.”

A rest period of 60 days.

When I returned to reality, I planned to spend my time stuck right by Min-jeong.

How lonely I had been for the last 12 months!

“Now, hurry up and go. A lonely man is unsightly.”

“Shut up.”

I went through the door the baby angel made.



I opened my eyes and it was, without fail, 11 am.

‘I should get the karma prize first.’

Having gotten a whopping 3,600 karma, I was plenty excited.

I summoned my board and ordered.

“Show me all my skills.”

Then appeared, all in a list, the skills I have acquired so far.

-Being displayed are all of examinee Kim Hyun-ho’s skills.

-Main skill: Spirit summons (entry level 6)

-Assist skills: Physical Strength Buff (intermediate level 3), Guider (entry level 1), Teleport (entry level 1).

-Special skill: skill synthesis

-Synthesis skill: Divine Protection of the Wind (entry level 1), Divine Protection of the Flame (entry level 1), reflex (intermediate level 1), flame of life (intermediate level 1), transmission (entry level 1), spacial storage (entry level 1), shooting (entry level 1)

-Remaining karma: +3,600

The more I looked at it, the prouder I felt.

There isn’t a fifth turn examinee who has achieved as much as I have.

‘Should I raise it starting from the physical strength buff?’

First, I asked the board.

“If I were to raise my physical strength buff to advanced level 1, how much karma would that cost?”

-Physical strength buff (assist skill) to be raised to advanced level 1 I am showing that karma cost.

-Physical strength buff (assist skill): strengthens the body.

*Intermediate level 5: fitness level of an adult male elf

-To get to intermediate level 5 cost is 1,500 karma.

-Aura control: for an examinee who hasn't mastered it, the physical strength buff cannot be raised to the advanced level.”

-Remaining karma: +3,600

‘Huh?’

I was completely surprised at the explanation that an advanced level was impossible.

It seemed the assist skill is affected by the main skill.

“Then the reflex too?”

Then the shape on the board changed.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): Know how to move your body

*Advanced level 1: Gain the abilities of a genius in body movement.

-Advanced level 1 to raise will use 3,600 karma

-Remaining karma: +3,600

If I poured all of my karma into the reflex skill, I could raise it to advanced level 1. In that case, no matter what it is, as long as it involved using my body, I would be a master. It was a level I couldn't even fathom.

Doesn't that mean if I watch someone dance and then copy the dance right after, I

would be a master at it?

But I shook my head.

‘It is too ineffective for pouring all my karma into.’

Although it seemed like it would be of good use in day to day activities, the important thing is to become stronger.

‘Let’s raise my physical strength buff first, all the way.’

The spirit summons and rifle and dual guns.

All of these attack methods that I had, putting the physical strength buff above all of them, there was a simple reason to it.

Because it was the safest decision.

First of all, the spirit summons is a main skill so even if I pour in 3,600 karma, I can’t raise the level very much.

Thanks to the Tree of Life having raised my levels, I think it would be ineffective to put it into the spirit summons.

Then the Mosin-Nagant and double guns.

In some respects, it is a very good weapon. Using guns in the Arena civilization that falls behind that of Earth, it is basically cheating.

But as Cha Ji-hye warned me, that as I go through the exams, there will be enemies that I cannot pierce with my guns.

Accounting for all those dangers, the physical strength buff becomes the safest choice.

First, I’ll need a strong body so I won’t lose out in strength or fitness.

“I will raise the physical strength buff to intermediate level 5.”

-1,500 karma to physical strength buff (assist skill) has been raised to intermediate level 5.

-Remaining karma: +2,100

Pat!

A light shone out from the board and penetrated me.

I would feel my body becoming even stronger.

‘So this is the limit of an elf’s body.’

If Entry level 5 was the limit of a human body, intermediate level 5 was the limit of an elf’s body!

Speaking strictly, based only on our bodies I am equal to, if not better than, Derrick.

Of course, I cannot follow in his amazing technique or charisma. Ah, Sir Derrick!

For a moment, I was lost in respect for Derrick, then came back to reality and focused again on the karma prize.

I asked this and that to the board and at the end of thinking thoroughly, this is the decision I came to.

-With 900 karma, I raised The Divine Protection of the Wind (synthesis skill) to entry level 5.

-Divine Protection of the Wind (synthesis skill): using the body, call upon the wind. The power of the skill is based on the user’s concentration and skill level along with the spirit summons skill level.

*Entry level 5: Total time 35 minutes. Cooling time 30 minutes.

-600 karma into the spatial storage (synthesis skill) – raised to entry level 4.

-Spatial storage (synthesis skill): Imagine a space and place objects in it. Use ‘enter’ and ‘retrieve’ orders to operate the space.

*Entry level 4: 110 x 110 x 110cm

-Remaining karma: +600

This was the optimal choice for making sure I had enough space for the gear I needed to use my guns.

Using the Divine Protection of the Wind for fast movement and a space to store lots of bullets!

I am only a 5th turn examinee.

Later, even if I encounter an enemy that bullets cannot penetrate, it would not be the end. Even if I was faced with a lycanthrope or undead, the guns would work on them.

Even considering the future, there is no downside to raising the levels of these skills.

What should I do with the remaining 600 karma?

It was enough karma to raise an entry level 1 assist skill or synthesis skill to a level 4.

Divine Protection of The Flame?

‘No, right now there is not an immediate use for the Divine Protection of The Flame.’

Shooting?

‘Not that yet either. The 100% accuracy is good enough for within 10 meters and anything beyond that, I can use Sylph for.’

Eventually, I chose this.

-600 karma to raise teleport (assist skill) to level 4.

-Teleport (assist skill): Move in the direction you chose. Think of a direction and say ‘teleport’ to instantly move to that location.

*Entry level 4: Distance 9 m, cooldown time 5 minutes

-Remaining karma: 0

At entry level 1, the distance was 1 m, and the cooldown time was an hour.

Even with a higher level, the distance didn’t change much. But at least the cooldown

time had a significant decrease.

‘I’m sure if I increase the level a little more I can use it consecutively without a cooldown.’

I then thought that if I could teleport without any limits, that would just be the biggest cheat.

Chapter 77

Leaving the Nest (Part 1)

“Oppa, do you notice anything different about me?”

If you want to scare a man, just ask him this question.

But thankfully, the thing that was different was very noticeable.

“You cut your hair?”

“Hehe, yeah.”

Min-jeong spun around in a circle.

Min-jeong, who had long straight hair, was now sporting a brown tone dyed bob.

Whether it is a C-curl perm or whatever, I wasn’t positive, but it sure was pretty. It’s been a year since I’ve seen her so, no matter what, she’s lovable.

“Why change your hair all of a sudden? Did you get dumped?”

Min-jeong giggled.

“I’ll be graduating college soon.”

The graduation is next year but classes are over in a few days so in reality, that was the end of college she said.

“Are you going to move up north as soon as you graduate?”

“I’m still looking for a place. I’ll move as it becomes available.”

I thought for a moment then said.

“I was thinking of moving out too, want to go to the same neighborhood?”

“Really?”

“Yeah, it’s about time anyway. I have enough money too.”

“Wow! So, we’ll still be together then?”

“Hur hur, I will chase after you no matter where. Didn’t you know I’m a bit stalkerish?”

“I don’t know about the stalker thing but you definitely have a little bit of a whipped husband thing.”

“Kuk, I cannot deny that.”

“Hehehe.”

Min-jeong stuck right by me.

The scent of her hair is so good. I was smelling Min-jeong for the first time in a year.

Then Min-jeong suddenly looked at me and tilted her head.

“That’s weird.”

“What is?”

“Why does it seem like we haven’t seen each other in a while?”

“Oh, really?”

“Yeah, it kind of feels like you’ve gone to the army and you’re a boyfriend out on your first break.”

I flinched.

“What about me feels like that?”

“The point that you’re very touchy?”

“...”

Her sixth sense is really sharp. Is she a ghost.

We watched a movie and drank coffee as we talked, and we mostly discussed about which neighborhood to move to.

Min-jeong said the company she'll be working at is in the Gasan Digital Complex.

"My relative oppa says Bucheon is a good place to live. There are a lot of malls and supermarkets and good amenities."

"Yeah? Then should we find out right away about Bucheon?"

I downloaded a real estate app on my smartphone and checked out Bucheon.

Min-jeong was hard at work tapping away on her smartphone too.

I searched in order of most expensive.

At the top is an efficiency apartment (a newer condo basically), the highest penthouse. The price is a sum of \$1.14 million USD.

Perhaps the maintenance fees are a lot but there's a lot of chatter on it about it feeling like a rental.

'Well, I'm crapping money so.'

Progressive tax or not, it doesn't have anything to do with me.

4 rooms, 2 bathrooms, the city scene is spread out like a screen.

More than anything, the size is more than 60 square meters. The vast terrace was very cool. Looking at the photo, it was called a terrace but it was no different than a lawn.

'It's cheap, I should get one.'

It was not cheap at all but in my swiss account I have more than \$26 million USD, so.

"Oppa, what are you looking at?"

Suddenly, Min-jeong looked at what the house listings I was looking at and was

shocked.

“Heek! Oppa, you’re going to buy this?”

“Yea, I think I might.”

“Isn’t it too expensive?”

“It’s only 1.14 million.”

“Only...”

Min-jeong looked at the penthouse pictures, one by one, with a strange look on her face.

“Nice, right?”

“Oppa, I’m so jealous! How nice would it be if I could live somewhere like this!”

“Between us, what do you mean. Come over any time.”

“You mean it?”

“Of course.”

Honestly, I wanted to move in together.

But let’s start out with coming over.

If she comes over a lot, there will be more days where she stays at my place instead of her one bedroom, and eventually, it will natural for her to move in.

‘Hur hur hur.’

From living alone for 12 months, my head went down treacherous paths very easily.

“I should use this one as my bedroom, huh? Since it has an attached bathroom and dressing room.”

“Yeah! And this room would be good for your office.”

“Office? I don’t really have anything to work on.”

“But you can put your computer and books and it can be an all-purpose room.”

“Ah, that sounds good.”

“And the one remaining room can be the guest room! How about a room for sleeping in guests? Decorated like a hotel room.”

“That’s nice.”

“Hehe, isn’t it?”

Min-jeong’s eyes were sparkling and she put up opinions passionately as if it was her house.

And every time she did, I would agree and smile at her. Ok, Min-jeong, this house is your house.

“Angg, oppa, you must be so happy. It’s like a rich person’s house from a drama. Look at this terrace. It’s a total trail!”

“Don’t you think it would be good for raising a big dog here? Maybe a Siberian husky.”

“Aw, that would be the best.”

Her face looked as if any second now, she’ll run out of breath.

I thought that this was the moment and I slipped in my words.

“This room, I can make it up as a guest room like you said, and you can come over lots and spend the night there, no?”

But Min-jeong’s face suddenly changed.

“Guest room? You won’t have me sleep next to you but you’ll send me away to the guest room?”

“Huh? Uh, no.”

“Hmph...”

Min-jeong pretended to be sulking. Yep. She’s definitely pretending to be sulking.

I have to find out why she’s suddenly pretending to be sulking.

‘What is it?’

It was definitely a coy act to get some kind of answer.

‘Hmm, is it that?’

I gave her the most exemplary answer I could think of and tried it out.

“I thought it would be too much pressure if I asked you to live with me, so.”

“Oh, oppa...”

Now Min-jeong was pretending to be surprised, pretending to be moved. Cute thing.

“But isn’t it too fast for us?”

...look at this child?

I gave her the response she wanted but instead of grabbing it, she’s toying some more?

If she’s going to be this way, that changes it a bit.

“Is it?”

“Yes...”

“You’re right, I think I was being too selfish. I’m sorry I pressured you.”

“Uh, no, that’s okay.”

Min-jeong had a reluctant face.

If this is what you want, lets pull and tug a bit.

The boyfriend has a luxurious penthouse, see if you can go back to your one room place.

As the talk of us moving in together ended like that, Min-jeong's face became full of regret.

We finished all the coffee and got up when Min-jeong said.

"Let's go to my place today. I'll make you food."

It looked like her face was full of spirit.

"Okay, are you going to make me something good?"

"I'll make you what you like the most. We can pick up groceries on our way."

"Okay."

On our way, we stopped by the store and grabbed some groceries.

Pork, carrots, onions, they all went in the basket. Min-jeong seemed full of determination.

'Hang in there.'

I just felt so happy.

We got back home and Min-jeong got busy in the kitchen and made a sweet pork stew for me.

'How long has it been since I've had meat.'

I ate only produce with the elves for a year and I was moved as I ate my meal. I emptied two bowls of rice.

"Are you full?"

"Yeah, that was really good."

"Then do you want to wash up together?"

“...Huh?”

Min-jeong grabbed my hand and headed to the bathroom.

That day, from being coy in the wrong direction, Min-jeong cooked a generous meal then went off to the bed, a full course of making me happy.

Naked, she was cuddled in my embrace and whispered.

“Was it good?”

“Yeah.”

This one day, today, was like I had gone to heaven.

“Hehe, us being like this, it’s like we’re a married couple, huh?”

I got it, so you can stop nagging.

“Let’s live together, Min-jeong.”

“Aw, bringing that up again.”

Like a habit, being coy again. Is this a bad habit of yours? It’s a conditioned reflex?

“Whew, sorry. I said I wouldn’t but there I go again.”

“What?”

Min-jeong was in a dilemma.

“I won’t bring this kind of stuff up anymore. I’m really sorry.”

Then,

“Crap!”

In a sudden rage, Min-jeong pinches me on the thigh.

I screamed out in laughter.



First, we made the decision, and having money was no problem.

I gathered the family together to tell them I was moving out and they all agreed.

Unlike my past of being a jobless man, now that I have a proper job now, moving out is not an issue at my age is what they thought.

“And you’ve got a place?”

At mom’s question, I nodded my head.

“There was a decent one room.”

Of course, the scale of my net worth remained a secret to my family. Because they’ll definitely want to know the origin of my money.

Unlike stupid Hyun-ji, mom and noona won’t believe the story I made up.

After informing my family, I quickly headed up to Bucheon the next day.

I met with the real estate agent that I had contacted earlier and together, we inspected the penthouse for sale.

“It’s nice.”

The house was much cooler than how it had looked in the pictures. The feeling of grandness could be felt.

“There isn’t a property like this elsewhere. If you’ve got the money, this is the house that everyone would want to live in.”

“I can pay cash in a lump sum but can you cut it down to 1.08 million?”

“Whew, even now, it is already pretty cheap...”

“Then there’s nothing?”

At my question, the real estate agent said

“Hmm, I’ll put in a good word and cut it down as much as I can.”

Saying I’ll pay cash right then, the owner said he’d take 1.1 million.

It isn’t that I’m stingy about this but if it can be done cheaper, then it should be done for cheaper.

I signed the papers right away and wire transferred the money and the penthouse became mine.

“Can you find a decent one room for me as well?”

“Why a one room?”

“To use for lots of things.”

If mom or noona visit, Min-jeong’s parents ambush, a break up with Min-jeong. All these situations need this extra one bedroom just in case.

In the penthouse, basic amenities like a fridge, gas range, electric range, oven, and drum washer were included but other than that, it was completely empty.

Having bought it in a flurry in one day, I didn’t get the feeling that this was my house.

I shook my head and mumble.

“Should I buy a bed first?”

I might as well get a king size.

Using the smartphone memo app, I made a list of things I needed as I thought of them.

Bed, desk, computer, TV, table, sofa.

What else was there?

I attached the memo and sent it as a text to Min-jeong.

In a little bit, Min-jeong sent back a text.

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: cooking utensils, tableware, toiletries, bath items, bookcase, oh and do you have a dresser?]

[Me: Yep each room has a closet installed and I have the dressing room.]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Can't we pick out furniture together?]

[Me: Why not, we're living in this house together]

[Yoo Min-jeong^^*: Aww ♥]

Just like that, I became independent.



The next day, I went to the mall with Min-jeong and wandered around and did some fortune shopping.

King sized bed.

A modern style desk and table, sofa, amidst other things.

I got a vanity desk for Min-jeong but, thinking about it, I needed a something too for doing my hair and rubbing things in my face and whatnot.

“Ah hungg (Ahhh), I'm so happy!”

Min-jeong was drunk in the fun of throwing all this money around.

Not being restrained by money, but buying the things that appeal to you the most, how sweet that is.

At the electronics store, we decided to get an 85-inch TV.

“Watching dramas on this will be like a movie theatre.”

“A theatre...”

Then booming sound is required.

Why not, I buy an audio system too.

I don't have much desire for a computer so I get a decent all-in-one PC.

The great march of impulse buying!

We bought everything we needed in a day.

"I think we're crazy."

The excitement was still not gone and Min-jeong's face was flushed red.

"Well, it's all stuff we needed anyway."

It was just that each thing was expensive.

That day, we got home and waited and the items we ordered started to come in like a moving truck.

Every time the employees brought the ordered items and set them up, the completely empty penthouse started to turn into a house with people living in it.

"Wow! I have to take a picture of this!"

The giant screen TV and audio were being set up and, seeing that in the living room, Min-jeong took a selfie and couldn't contain herself.

"Wait, you're not sending it to Hyun-ji, are you?"

"Oh right, I won't send it."

Can't relax.

Hyun-ji knew that I had lots of money, at least she got the gist of it when we went on the Europe trip, but she didn't know yet that I'm actually this rich.

If she were to see the sum in my account, there's no telling how clingy she would become.

Chapter 78

Leaving the Nest (Part 2)

I woke up and jumped off the sofa.

Min-jeong, overcoming all of the obstacles, managed to hang onto the tiny sofa, sleeping well, stuck right next to me.

Why are we like this?

Ah.

I remember.

In the middle of the night, we had connected the laptop to the big 85-inch screen TV and were watching a movie.

Leaving a king size bed empty, we spent our first night in the new house here, my goodness.

I easily lifted Min-jeong and moved her to the bed. I tried to leave after doing so when Min-jeong fidgeted and grabbed ahold of me with both her arms.

Our lips met and I slipped her shirt using my right hand. She must not have liked that because she lightly brushed it away. Still sleepy I see.

I gave her a light kiss and grabbed my smartphone and left the room.

The 60-meter sq. terrace is as big as a yard I walked around it as I made a phone call.

-Did you do well in your exam?

The person on the other line was Odin.

“Yes, I cleared it safely.”

-That is good. I am the same. There was not anything difficult but it somehow felt like the calm before a storm.

“...?”

-Do you remember Viscount Bastian?

“Of course.”

-They told me to prepare for war against him. That was the last exam.

“War?”

-Indeed. Last time, to help you, the dispatched army lost to them. I can't just let it pass.

I'm getting a feeling that the situation in the Arena is flowing rather unnaturally at the moment.

“If that was the exam, would it be correct to assume that the Arena gods want Viscount Bastian to be attacked?”

-That was my guess as well. The exam was probably like that since the goal is to mount an attack against Viscount Bastian.

“I think everything that is happening is centering around the elves on the brown mountain.”

-Elves? Are you by any chance with the elves over that way?

“Yes.”

-Surprising. There probably isn't another examinee who can contact the elves.

I gave him a simple explanation of the happenings around the brown mountain.

The silver clan lycanthropes to the east of the brown mountain.

Viscount Bastian to the north.

To the south, the disgusting undead that are creeping up the cliffside.

I could not get rid of the feeling that there were attacks from all sides of the elves.

“If Viscount Bastian makes a deal with the silver clan, the humans that recently tried to kidnap the young elf can be accounted for as deeds done by Viscount Bastian.

-Hmm...

“Do you know about a black magic wizard?”

-Black magic is already one of the forbidden magics from the previous nation. Originally, it was a field that it came about from researching eternal youth and immortality.

“The undead are attacking the elves’ territory in hordes, how about thinking of the silver clan and Viscount Bastian and black magic as all linked?”

-You mean to see it very broadly. For sure if we look at it that way, we can also say that the situation being orchestrated from behind involves some kind of group or influence that is targeting the elves.

“Couldn’t they be the ultimate goal of the exam?”

-That would be a hasty conclusion.

“I suppose.”

-No need to make things so difficult for ourselves. In the end, all we need to do is clear the exams we are given.

Odin continued to say.

-I will annihilate Viscount Bastian in the next exam. On your side, you will probably fight with the undead or the lycanthropes.

“Yes, more than likely.”

-Then destroying two of the three will break the alliance.

“I see. I just have to clear the exam I’m given.”

-The direction we should be going in, we should expect that the exam will specify that for us.

“Yes.”

I had a different opinion on that part.

I think we have to anticipate ahead of time about what the gods want.

The reason I was able to make such an explosive growth was because I did that.

-Anyhow, I expect good things in the next one from you as well.

“Yes, you too.”

-And...

“Go ahead.”

-I hear chairman Park Jin-seong has made a full recovery.

“Yes.”

-What is your given length of rest period this time?

“It is 60 days. I have 58 left now.”

-Can I make one request?

“Your daughter?”

-You are quick to catch on.

It was obvious since he brought up chairman Park Jin-seong’s complete recovery first.

“Would it be possible for my daughter to stay with you until the end of the year?”

“That would be fine.”

“Thank you. What would you like in compensation?”

I thought about it carefully.

First off, not really money. I have plenty now.

If possible, I wanted it to be useful in Arena. He is a lord in Arena after all.

“I heard that elves are being distributed as slaves in Arena.

-There are such bastards out there. It is always noble families that are full of themselves. They think that a rare slave that is difficult to catch, like an elf, shows their status. I believe in human rights from a modern earth so that sort of thing makes me gag.

“Would it be difficult for you to gather as many elf slaves as possible and buy them and send them my way?”

-Elf slaves?

“Yes, and with that opportunity, Odin’s family and the brown mountain elves can make an alliance.”

-That is a good idea!

Odin loudly votes yes.

-I am in the middle of war preparations, thus attaining elf slaves will not be easy, but if we can build friendly relations with the brown mountain elves, it is definitely worth trying.

“Then consider that as my compensation.”

-Is that all? This makes me a profit.

-Good is good. If we do that and it is a help to the elves then that is my contribution as well.

-Understood. I will do that. You are laying a bridge for me and the elves.”

“Good.”

-I will let you know before my daughter gets there.

The phone call ended like that.

I returned to the bedroom and Min-jeong had thrown off her clothes and was gesturing to me.

Does she think I went outside because I was sulking for being turned down earlier?

Seeing her nude, I forgot all worldly thoughts.

Good is good.

I decided to pretend I was upset for the rejection earlier.



The other empty room was going to be a guest room like Min-jeong suggested.

We got a small bed and a vanity so that no matter who comes that it would be a good atmosphere for a few days.

When Odin's daughter comes, she can sleep here.

While we're at it, I decided to decorate the terrace too.

For my training, I got a sandbag and a mu ren zhuang* and set it up outside.

It appears often in Chinese martial arts movies, with arms, legs, and trunk made of wood.

I'm not sure it'll make for good practice but I thought that it might so I went ahead and bought it. I had lots of money and the impulse to buy it was strong.

I thought why not and bought the mu ren zhuang but I ended up liking it more than I thought I would.

As a martial arts newbie, I didn't know how or what to do with this thing, but by watching martial arts videos on YouTube, little by little, I was able to copy it.

Reflex intermediate level 1.

I was easily able to follow the movements from the YouTube videos.

I was quickly able to figure out the motions and I began to practice actual fighting from those movements.

I had a gun in each hand and practiced on the mu ren zhuang.

By applying the movements, as I went between the jangsu*, I aimed the guns at the body.

(TN: I have absolutely no idea what that is. It might be a Korean stone mat but that doesn't make sense in this context.)

Pa pa pat!

My arms got faster and faster.

With my physical strength buff at intermediate level 5, my body was like steel and even with my wrists bent, I held the guns while shooting since there was no way they would get hurt from the recoil.

Because of that, I fought freely with the mu ren zhuang as my opponent while using guns for close combat fighting.

'Although I don't know if this will be effective in real fight.'

For now, I do it as a way to kill time.

Not only that, I practiced kicking on the sandbag.

Pu pu puk!

I kicked with all my might and jumped and tried a triple kick.

In midair, I twisted by body and kicked, with one hand on the ground, I landed and did that two more times in a row.

The reason I kept practicing a difficult move like this was that when I was fighting the

undead while hanging on a cliffside, I used a lot of kicks.

I was practicing this in case I ran into a situation where I couldn't control my body's center of

gravity well while kicking.

"Oppa, come eat!"

I could hear Min-jeong's voice coming from inside.

Only then did I stop exercising and went into the kitchen and saw the feast prepared on the table and I was blown away.

"You did all this?"

"Hehe, it's a special day, I marinated this yesterday."

Braised short ribs.

I gave Min-jeong a kiss on her cheek and ate like a madman.

Min-jeong looked at me happily and, at that moment, almost looked like a wife.

This really made us feel like newlyweds.

Even though this relationship started without much thought and just from temptation, the more I dated her, the more I thought that Min-jeong was a fine woman.

'If I clear all the exams, getting married wouldn't be bad.'

Later, I don't know how our feelings might change.

I didn't dare to think about it too deeply

Because now, I don't know when I might suddenly die in the exams and I couldn't make promises of the distant future. So I didn't want to bother with it. That's all.

"Oh right, Min-jeong."

“Yes, oppa.”

“I’m going to have a foreign guest soon.”

“Foreign?”

“Yeah, it’s the daughter of a person I know and I said I would watch her until the end of the year. Is that okay?”

“Someone’s daughter... well how old is she?”

“Not sure? I’m guessing pretty young?”

“Whew.”

Min-jeong let out a sigh of relief. Haha.

“Then that’s okay. And no if she is over 15.”

“What do you mean over 15, aren’t you giving me a way too big of a zone range?”

At my dissatisfaction, Min-jeong giggled.

Then, a few days, I get a call from Odin.

-In Korean time, Isabella will arrive tomorrow at 8:40 am.

“Isabella?”

-You can call her Bella. If you see the most beautiful blonde child, that is Bella.

What is this sudden change.

Him saying such stuff so sincerely took me by surprise.

The next morning, I went to Incheon airport like Odin said. Min-jeong insisted she come along and got in the passenger seat.

“Before I see her with my own eyes I cannot believe she won’t be an adversary.”

“...it is not like all the women in the world pass me notes into my breast pocket.”

“Hmph! You’re not contacting this gal, are you?”

“Like I said, I’m not.”

“Then show me your smartphone.”

“Have at it.”

I unlocked the phone with the code and handed the smartphone to Min-jeong.

Min-jeong flipped through the call log when suddenly she started doing something to it.

“What are you doing?”

“It’s not anything.”

“You’re not doing anything weird?”

“Nope.”

Then my smartphone vibrated.

“Huh? You have a call.”

“Give me.”

The caller id is...

[Cutey Wife <3]

“.....”

“Hehe, aren’t you going to pick it up?”

She was hard at work clicking away and it was this.

I answered the phone.

“Hello.”

“Hello.”

“Yes, is this the person that is my wife?”

“Hehe, this is.”

“This is the person that roams around clubs with Hyun-ji, yes?”

“Aw come on, it’s been a long time since I quit that. It’s not fun anymore.”

“Did you really though? Won’t the true nature of going to play at clubs come out at some sudden point?”

“No can do. My husband is a bit of a stalker.”

“Oh darn, that must be exhausting for you.”

“No one says otherwise. He bothers me so much every night, my hips are aching lately.”

“.....”

“Not only that, but suddenly he’s gotten much better at it. Isn’t it suspicious? What bitch would he have practiced with?”

That, my girl, is because my physical strength buff level increased. Who would have known that that would have had its effect in that department as well.

“That... is because your husband is a genius.”

Finally, Min-jeong exploded in laughter while grabbing her stomach and bent over laughing.

Chapter 79

Bella (Part 1)

“Let’s go, cutie.”

“Yes, Mr. Genius.”

We parked the Porsche cayenne in the parking lot and went into the entrance of the Incheon Airport.

We arrived at the entrance of the arrival doors where the people were pouring out.

People were reuniting and hugging each other. It was quite a sight.

“Oppa, but shouldn’t we be holding a picket (sign) or anything?”

“I wonder.”

“How will you identify her?”

“He said his daughter is the prettiest blonde girl.”

“...is that trustworthy information?”

“Anyway, it’s time so let’s take a look.”

It was true that Odin was a handsome and gorgeous blonde man. If she is like him, she could be very beautiful.

It was about 9 am.

People started pouring out of the gate again.

And one group immediately popped out.

A small blond girl and a foreign woman in black formal wear.

“Oh my goodness! She’s really pretty!”

Min-jeong was in awe.

I was also in awe.

She was really cute!

With blonde hair, delicate and pale skin, round blue eyes.

Like Odin said, she is pretty and was immediately noticeable. Enough to be afraid of.

Audacious Min-jeong waved her hand like mad.

The middle-aged woman must have noticed us as well because she started heading in our direction.

“Kim?”

“Yes.”

I was afraid she’d speak to me in a foreign tongue and say blah blah blah but thank goodness.

She handed a large trunk bag over to me.

I looked at the small girl.

“Bella?”

Bella smiled giddily and nodded her head.

“Oh my my.”

At her fatal laughter, Min-jeong was once again hit directly in the heart.

I looked at Bella and introduced myself.

“Hyun-ho Kim.”

“Hi-no.”

“Hyun-ho.”

“Hi-no.”

“Hyun, Ho!”

“Hi, no!”

“Stop it already!”

Min-jeong slapped me on the back. The middle-aged foreign lady looked at this and smiled.

“Hi? I am Min-jeong Yoo. Min-jeong.”

“Min-jeong.”

“Why is that one so accurate!”

I said in anger and Min-jeong slapped my back again.

Bella lifted her skirt a little and greeted us.

“Oh my, oh my!”

I think Min-jeong’s eyes have turned into hearts.

Suddenly, in no time at all, Bella was embraced in Min-jeong’s arms. I was just left to drag the trunk bag full of Bella’s things.

The middle-aged lady gave Bella a kiss and said goodbye and left somewhere, and we left with Bella to the parking lot.

Min-jeong sat with Bella in the backseat and I drove in front all alone.

In one moment, a newlywed and now that there was a child I had become a non-priority husband.

From what I heard, Bella was nine years old that year.

Incredibly bright and not a shy child, she had no problem becoming to Min-jeong.

Well, Min-jeong has pretty tough skin too. They already seemed like a mother and daughter.

We arrived at the officetel (condo) in Bucheon and went up in the elevator when Bella suddenly wavered and nearly fell when Min-jeong caught her.

“Oh gosh, are you okay?”

She didn’t understand but got the gist of it and Bella nodded her head.

My face became grim.

It wasn’t like it happened while she was walking, it was weird that she nearly fell so suddenly while just standing. This could be what Odin was saying, Bella’s disease.

We guided Bella to the room that we had made the guest room.

“Let’s unpack your things together.”

Min-jeong unpacked Bella’s things from her trunk and began to organize them in the closet.

Hanging the clothes on hangers and putting the undergarments and socks in the drawers.

She puts the couple picture books in Danish on the vanity.

And then an unexpected item appeared from the trunk bag.

“Violin?”

Min-jeong was surprised and asked and Bella just smiled and nodded her head.

It was definitely a small one, child sized.

“Play a bit, will you? Hmm?”

Min-jeong tried to hand her the violin and beg but Bella smiled uneasily and shook her head back and forth.

I stopped Min-jeong.

“She almost fell earlier too and I think she’s tired today.”

“Oh right. Unni is sorry.”

Min-jeong pecked Bella on the cheek with a kiss.

It was when the two amicably have unpacked and were hanging out when I got a call from Odin.

I went out to the terrace to take the call.

“Hello.”

-Has Bella arrived?

“Yes, as you said, she is very beautiful.”

-I do not lie.

“.....”

-Anyway, how is Bella’s condition?

“She nearly fell and we caught her.”

-... is that so?

“What disease is Bella suffering from?”

-It is Lou Gehrig’s.

“Huh?”

At the sound of a scary disease, I’m completely surprised.

I don't know it well, but the muscles progressively don't listen and in the end, you are unable to breathe and thus die, a scary disease, is what I know of it.

The most famous person with this disease now is Stephen Hawking.

"Is the disease genetic?"

-Among this disease, patients have a 5 – 10 % of inheriting amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and of those, 20% of them are associated with a mutation on the 21st chromosome.

"....."

The medical knowledge flowing from his lips.

How severe Odin's heartache must be, that this is his way of expressing it.

-Before this, the symptoms had not really appeared, but not long ago, Bella cried. I asked her why. She said her fingers weren't moving well and so she couldn't play the violin.....

His voice sounded so miserable that I quickly changed the subject.

"I will try and fix her. Do not worry."

-Thank you.

I ended the call and returned to the room Min-jeong and Bella were in.

"Min-jeong, isn't it about time to eat?"

"It's only 10 now."

"Really? Then why do I feel so empty."

"Is our Bella hungry too?"

Min-jeong rubbed her belly and then pretended to eat something.

Bella made her especially cute smile and nodded her head.

“Okay, hold on just a wee bit.”

Min-jeong whistled as she disappeared into the kitchen.

Now was the perfect time.

I made a flame of life.

Bella’s eyes became big and wide when she saw the flame that appeared on my hand. How could even her surprised face be so cute.

I push the flame into Bella’s body.

At first, Bella was completely surprised, but as the flame seeped into her, finally, her surprised face strangely changed.

“It feels good, right?”

I gave her a smile. Bella found it all interesting and followed up with a smile.

I handed the violin again to Bella.

To Bella’s hesitant hands, I suggested it again.

Briefly, across her face, she showed a nervous expression.

And then the performance began.

Monotonous but wonderful. It was a melody I think I have heard somewhere before.

Our eyes met and Bella smiled again.

I smiled back.

His daughter is his treasure to Odin, Isabella was truly an adorable and lovable child.

Min-jeong had quickly rushed over to listen to Bella’s playing together.

“You are so good, dear Bella.”

Having finished her performance, Bella hugged Min-jeong and rubbed her cheeks against her. Bella giggled happily.

Bella, with the flame of life administered, unlike earlier, has become much more spirited. The fatigue from riding long hours on a plane, all of it has disappeared.

Min-jeong was hard at work on something in the kitchen for quite a long time.

“Should I come help?”

“It’s all done.”

What she has made is a Korean sweet called Maejapgwa (Korean fried cake).

Flour and cinnamon, ginger, sugar, honey, put together and whisked and shaped into a pretty shape and fried into a cookie.

“You, you know how to make this kind of stuff too?”

“I learned it a while ago. It takes a lot of work. Just know you’re being spoiled today.”

“Wow, its thanks to my cutesy wife that I’m living in luxury.”

“Hehehe.”

I gently came up behind her and gave her a hug and she liked it quite a bit.

At the same time, we heard the sound of Bella’s violin again. Her hands have returned to their original state and she must have been excited so she started diligently playing.

What excellent background music this is. Thanks to a beautiful melody, a strange atmosphere flowed.

I could hear Min-jeong’s heartbeat in my ears.

The atmosphere such that I can’t not say something romantic. What is this? How did it suddenly get like this?

All of a sudden, plunged into too much pressure, I groaned inside and considered what to do.

I couldn't help it and said.

"I guess I'll have to repay you tonight."

Puk!

"Kuk!"

With all her might, Min-jeong stepped on my foot.

"What is that! And did I or did I not say earlier that my hips were hurting?"

"You, you did. I thought you were just saying that....."

"Lately, the nighttime is scary! You'd strangely become really good and your stamina is monstrous!"

The romantic feeling has passed.

...is what I thought but that apparently wasn't the case.

Min-jeong pushed out her hips to me and said something.

"Start over from the beginning. The music hasn't stopped yet."

"Uh, okay."

She really isn't your average girl. Who would ever say she wasn't friends with Hyun-ji.

I hugged her again from behind and whispered in her ear.

"I love you."

"...again."

"I love you."

"With my name to it."

"Min-jeong, I love you."

“Again.”

“I love you, Min-jeong Yoo.”

“Again.....”

I glanced at her face. I could see the tears welling up in her eyes.

I gently grabbed face and kissed her.

“I love you.”

Bella really enjoyed eating the maejagwa. Crunch, crunch, chewy and sweet, the aftertaste that lingers is the best.

The whole while we’re eating we frequently looked at each other.

On account of how frequently our eyes met multiple times, we just laughed every time it happened.

We could call it the Bella Effect.

After that day, our relationship changed from how it was before. To say what was different would be difficult to explain in words.

After that day, bold and brazen and bubbly Min-jeong somehow was like a teenager and became very shy.

She was conscious of me and bashful, and even was shy changing her clothes in front of me.

Even while laying down using my arm as a pillow, a moment later, in case my arm hurt, sneakily separating and covering me to my neck with the blanket.

I used to like looking at each other but now, I like when she looks at me and I’m not looking.

Something has changed in a big way.

Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing, there is no way to know.



Every day, I gave 2 flames of life to Bella.

They were the flames of life that treated the great Tree of Life that reached to the sky.

Bella became very lively.

Considering that the beginning signs of Lou Gehrig's had happened to this child, she was unbelievably mischievous.

'That's her real personality.'

A bright personality that smiled easily and wasn't shy, she became friends with others very easily.

I am sure that Bella was originally a brighter child than any other.

One day, Bella gave me the violin.

"You want me to try?"

We couldn't communicate, but at my question, Bella nodded her head and pretended to play the violin.

"Alright, should I try and learn?"

I put the violin on my shoulder and put the bow to the strings and make a sound. Is this how to do it?

Keek.

Bella laughed ecstatically.

Alright, this time I won't fail.

I tried to make a sound again.

Keek!

Bella covers both her ears with her hands.

After trying a couple times, I'm able to make a sound.

Jiiing-

Bella looks surprised.

I'm surprised too.

'You see, my reflex skill was intermediate level 1.'

I was even able to easily follow the mu ren zhuang training.

But making the right sound from the violin wasn't easy. It is an atrociously difficult instrument to handle.

But it not being easy.....

'Means it counts as training?'

I stared blankly at Bella's child-sized violin.

I have found a new way to increase my reflex skill!

Chapter 80

Bella (Part 2)

I started researching violins on the internet.

The first thing I learned was that they were ridiculously expensive?

The violin itself is crazy expensive, so is the bow, and the case they go in is expensive too.

On the internet shopping mall, I searched in order of highest price and looked in the middle but it was still about 10 grand.

It said it was from the 19th century from Italy or something like that in the description.

For someone trying to learn it for the first time, having a violin like this would be like putting pearls on a pig.

‘Ok, order.’

Well, who cares, I’m drowning in money.

As a complete newbie me, I went ahead and ordered the \$10,000 grand violin.

When I get good, I’ll buy the most expensive one.

I just went ahead and called the seller and asked for expedited delivery.

“Yes, we can send it right away.”

As I was a buyer purchasing an expensive item, the seller was very compliant.

“As long as it’s a good product, I’ll order right away.”

“Well, if you do we’d be grateful. No need to worry about the product. If there is a

defect in such a grand item, that would be a problem.”

Then that takes care of the violin, now back to surfing the web.

In the Bucheon area, I’m looking for a violin instructor.

There are rather a lot of specialists looking for jobs so it wasn’t hard.

-Hello?

It was a woman’s voice. Some name brand music school was listed in the blurb and her voice sounded about that age.

“You teach violin? I am calling in regards to your blog message.”

-Ah, yes!

“I am a complete noob, and I have a child from out of the country and she is pretty good.”

-Oh, does the child speak Korean?

“None at all. She can’t even say my name.”

The woman laughed.

-I understand. First, I’ll meet and see the level and then decide.

“Yes.”

-When should I come by?

“Immediately, today.”

-Excuse me? Oh, yes, what time today?

“Would 8 pm work?”

-Sure.

Hmm, rapid events indeed. Having money makes things this easy.

A few hours later, the delivery came by and dropped off the violin.

“Bella.”

Bella, who had been in her room excitedly playing the violin, ran out.

“Look at this.”

Bella’s eyes shined bright and she touched my violin.

She tried to lift it and put it under her chin but it was too big and she couldn’t get the grip right. Haha, even that is so cute.

But she persevered and managed to lift the bow too.

“How is it?”

I raised my thumb and asked. Bella nodded her head and raised her thumb the same way.

Hmm, seems good.

We fidgeted with the violin together and while Min-jeong prepared dinner for us.

Today was a feast too and I told Min-jeong.

“You must be tired. Make it simpler from now on.”

“I have the Korean food cooking certification skills exam so I am practicing for it. Once I get the certificate I’ll start cooking simpler meals.”

“I’m sure you’ll get it. You’re so good.”

“Hehe.”

At my compliment, Min-jeong put on a bashful expression. What, why is she like this. Not cocky like before.

We ate and then watched some TV and at 8 pm, the tutor I called arrived.

“Ah, hello.”

“Please, come in.”

Min-jeong greeted the music tutor.

Min-jeong glanced at me with narrow open eyes. Here it is again, that blocking instinct.

But the music tutor was a noticeably beautiful woman, so she’s right.

With long straight hair like Min-jeong’s was before she cut it, with clear features, it all made for an innocent looking face.

“Rest easy. I’ll go bring some snacks, yubo.*

(TN: An endearing way of calling someone ‘honey’. Usually only used by married couples though. Pronounced yoh bo.)

At Min-jeong’s words, I flinched and nodded my head.

“Uh, okay, do that, yubo.”

“Your wife is a beauty.”

“Isn’t she?”

“She is very young.”

“Yes, she looks young for her age.”

But really, she is young. She is only in her early 20’s.

Min-jeong probably has her ears raised in the kitchen and was listening to this conversation.

I introduced Bella and then started the lesson.

“You must start from reading music.”

“Yes.”

“And Bella is about a Suzuki level 2.”

“What is a Suzuki?”

After listening to the explanation, it is the most famous 10 book violin instruction. I wonder if it is easy to level 3 and then incredibly difficult henceforth?

It is such a popular teaching material that it is also used among amateurs to discern talent amongst them.

I learned to read the music.

Bella, who had been listening on the side, followed like a parrot to the teacher. It suddenly became a simultaneous Korean lesson.

I was hard at work taking notes as I went along and Min-jeong brought us snacks and with lynx-eyes looked at the teacher and me.

Like that, the 2-hour lesson was over.

“How many lessons would you like a week?”

Asked the teacher.

“Is every day possible?”

“Um, every day?”

“Yes, I will pay handsomely.”

The teacher consented.



Now that I had learned how to read the music, it was full on and the fun violin learning began.

The violin is a disgustingly difficult instrument. Even just making the sound isn't easy.

But still, the teacher was surprised.

“How did you learn so fast?”

“Is this fast?”

Having practiced a week and it being a feat to make one good sound, it made me dubious.

“You are very quick. The reason office workers attempt the violin as a hobby and give up is because of the time it takes to make the proper sound.”

Is that so?

What a cursed instrument.

I now realized how great violinists are.

“Bella is incredible.”

I mumble while looking at Bella, who was playing with ease by my side.

Bella opened her eyes wide and I gave her a thumbs up to say that she’s the best.

Bella gave a big smile.

“Ugh, so cute.”

“She is.”

The teacher was smitten too.

With two flames of life being given to her every day, Bella has become energetic and her violin skill made daily progress.

Even an amateur like me could see the daily progress.

It was as if the skill that was suppressed because her disease is now in full bloom.

Bella, with joy that her fingers are moving as she wants now, excitedly played the

violin.

2 weeks passed by like this.

I asked Sylph for noise reduction and practiced the violin like crazy on the terrace.

‘If someone sees, they’ll think I’m crazy.’

For real though, sometimes Min-jeong looked at me with eyes like that.

But this is training.

More so than training with martial arts, raising the reflex skill level is the profit.

Reflex.

The ability to move the body at will.

In some ways, it can be said that it is the most fundamental martial art.

The violin is the fastest training method to raising that skill level.

‘It will definitely work.’

Intermediate level 1 reflex was being used, which is why my violin skill was improving so much faster than the average person.

So that is why I must practice the violin as hard as I can, so I can raise my reflex level.

I did a lot of drastic exercises in the elf village. But timing every finger correctly, delicately moving, that kind of movement is a first for me and it makes it a very high difficulty level training.

“Oh, oppa, aren’t you going to work?”

“Yea, I don’t have to work.”

“You’re going to become a violinist?”

“No, this is a hobby.”

“What hobby are you doing like you’re possessed?”

“Because it’s fun.”

Min-jeong worried about me, playing the violin all day like an unemployed man.

But there were results.

2 weeks later, I played the last gavotte in the Suzuki book 1.

“How in the world...”

The teacher looked like she couldn’t believe it.

Bella, with a face full of surprise, also started clapping.

“Am I a fast learner?”

“Too fast! Mr. Hyun-ho, you are a genius, a genius! Why did you not take up music to begin with?”

“Uh, not sure.”

At the teacher’s strong reaction, it makes me feel shy.

I moved right onto Suzuki book 2’s first piece, Judas Maccabeus.

A crazy learning speed.



“Huanag!”

Bella exploded into tears. She collapsed to the floor and kicked her legs and cried.

Odin made a bitter smile.

Today is December 31.

It was the day Bella goes back to Denmark.

Her father Odin came to get her personally, and Bella was crying saying she doesn't want to go. She has grown quite attached to us during that time.

While Min-jeong soothed Bella, Odin came out with me to the terrace and we had a conversation with just the two of us.

It is because no one can hear us speak in the Arena language.

"It has been a long time since I've seen Bella sob like that."

"She's grown very attached. I'm upset about it too."

"I am glad."

"Huh?"

"Even as she cries and resists and tantrums, I can tell Bella's health has improved quite a bit. I can tell in one glance that she has gotten much better."

"Hahaha..."

"Thank you very much."

Odin held my hands tight.

"I think she has gotten much better but I don't know that it will heal her disease."

"I will observe the results and if needed, I may request your assistance once more."

"Please do."

"Then next time, I shall see you in the Arena."

"Yes."

We went with them to the Incheon airport to see Odin and Bella off.

Before Bella left, she stayed in Min-jeong's arms and sobbed. A cute little girl, miserably crying, it made our eyes naturally water too.

On our way home, Min-jeong said.

“Wasn’t Bella so cute?”

“Yep.”

“Hing, I want a daughter like that too.”

“...shall I give you one?”

Min-jeong chuckled aloud at my bad joke.

Thankfully, that talk ended there.

Somehow, I feel that bit by bit that Min-jeong was wanting to get married and it made me nervous.

Right now, I don’t have the capacity to think of things like that.

I don’t know when I will die and I don’t want to leave a family behind.



We spent the new year together and in the middle of January, Min-jeong started going to work at her cousin’s company in the Gasan digital district.

The days of leisurely sticking together and playing have ended.

“Darn, the good days have gone.”

“To eat and live, you have to work.”

“Hmph, oppa, you can be responsible for me.”

“Now now, one must be responsible for one’s own life.”

“Hmph.”

With a slightly disappointed face, Min-jeong left for work.

Dear girl, even as a joke, if I say I'll take care of you, the atmosphere will somehow start feeling like we need to get married. That won't do.

Being alone, the training became easier. I did the training I was unable to do because Min-jeong might have seen.

"Teleport."

Pat!

In an instant, I felt my body lift and I was suddenly standing in front of the mu ren zhuang.

"Weapon Neilson H2, Divine Protection of the Wind."

I held the dual pistols in both hands and the Divine Protection of the Wind activated.

I lightly took a step and quickly moved from left to right and hit the mu ren zhuang.

Dodging between the stick arms while twisting my hands to target the mu ren zhuang. I repeated these movements like a machine.

Jumping using and using the wind, I instantly increased the distance. I leapt again and shortened the distance and aimed again.

In the time it took to blink, I flew to the opposite side and kicked the sandbag while aiming the dual pistols at the mu ren zhuang at the same time.

While pouring sweat, I finished the training and afterwards, I practiced the violin. I got rid of the sound with Sylph and repeatedly played the pieces I had learned thus far.

The playing of a violin was not easy so even a bit carelessness while practicing is very obvious.

I'm already doing it so I look at the next piece I'll be learning.

And then.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): know how to move your body well.

*Intermediate level 2: In all actions requiring body movement, possess prodigious abilities.

“Yes!”

I lifted the violin and bow and shouted out.

Yes, the reflex skill level was raised.

A fairly high level intermediate level 1, I raised it in a month so it's a pretty impressive result.

Playing tag with the elves and fighting zombies on the cliffside, I went from entry level 5 to intermediate level 1 and that took a long time.

‘It seems a new training that I’ve never done before will be of more aid.’

When I get good at the violin, I thought I’ll pick up another instrument.

Chapter 81

Back to the Arena (Part 1)

The 60-day rest period went by smoothly.

Living with Min-jeong went by without a problem.

Min-jeong, busy with work, still always made me delicious food, and on days that we were too tired, we ate out.

I, of course, stayed at home and used Sylph to make the house spotless so we didn't have any issues with each other.

I actually had Sylph memorize the original placement of every item in the house. That made organizing incredibly easy. Even if I made a real mess, Sylph could use her wind once and she could clean it up instantly.

My family was well too.

Noona, who works at a big law firm, needed not be mentioned at all of course, and mom continued to sell her fried chicken well.

Nowadays, mom has been thinking of retiring and wants Hyun-ji to take over, and was in a hurry to do so.

Even with so much money, there's no place for me to put it for family.

If my family was poor, I could have splashed out the money and saved the family.

The only problem our family has is Hyun-ji.

-Son, son, talk some sense into Hyun-ji.

"What about Hyun-ji?"

-She said she wants to move out.

“Move out?”

-She said there's lots of business in Seoul and said she wants to move there.

It is not a completely unfounded excuse.

“Maybe she's feeling the pressure now that she's graduated and officially started the unemployed life.”

-Why should I treat her like a queen if she's unemployed?

“So, what did you tell her?”

-I told her to move out with her own money. And Hyun-ju put her foot down and said she won't help.

(TN: Hyun-ju is the older sister, in case you forgot.)

Even though I wasn't there, I'm sure Hyun-ji threw a tantrum and insisted. The heartless mother-daughter combo probably didn't flinch.

“Isn't that a bit too harsh to Hyun-ji? At least she's thinking of getting a job.”

-She just thinks it. You know her well enough too. It's the kids that don't study well that say they're going to study. They just don't actually do it.”

I know it well.

The bundegi bastard said it was because I had never known starvation.

-Anyway, Hyun-ji might nag you about it so beware.

“Got it.”

As soon as that call ended, a text came.

It's Hyun-ji.

[Hyun-ji: Oppa, are you home?]

[Me: yeah]

[Hyun-ji: Ok]

‘Ok to what.’

I felt a slight worry.

Finally, I get a call from Hyun-ji, and it’s a video call.

“Hello?”

-Oppa~!

“What, it’s that voice you use when you want something.”

-Hing, oppa!

It sounded similar to Min-jeong.

That’s why it annoyed me even more.

“What do you want.”

-Oppa, turn in a circle with your phone.

“What are you saying?”

-So I can see what kind of house you live in.

I flinched at that.

Clever girl.

So that was why she first asked through text if I was home.

The fact that I live in a luxurious penthouse is a secret that only Min-jeong knew.

-Hurry up and show me. Hehe, oppa, you have lots of money so you aren’t living in a crowded studio. And all the while you were prepping for the entrance exams, you were

in that basement studio so you probably shudder at the thought of them.

For an idiot, she's quite sharp in this area. What useless insight.

-Hurry up and show me.

"I don't want to."

-Why not?

-I'm shy.

I said with slight aegyo.

-Don't BS me.

At my aegyo, Hyun-ji's expression turned icy.

-Oppa, I know you live with Min-jeong.

"Say what?"

-Min-jeong told me everything.

...Yoo Min-jeong!

Hyun-ji made a sweet grin.

-Every time I asked her what she's doing she said she was out grocery shopping. Would she shop so much if she was living alone? She's being all like a newlywed wife. Can't trick me.

"For an idiot..."

"Hey, don't call me an idiot! Anyway, are you really going to say you live with Min-jeong in a tiny studio? I felt it last time when we went to Europe, but I think oppa, you have a lot more money than I think you do.

I couldn't help but shudder at Hyun-ji's incredible insight.

“I can’t show you my home.”

-Hmph, really? I guess I’ll just have to torture Min-jeong.

“Don’t you bother Min-jeong! I’m going to tell her to keep her lips sealed well.”

-Puahaha, lips sealed, Min-jeong?

Hyun-ji laughed like she had just experienced a hilarious comedy.

-She might not seem like it but you know she’s actually a huge pushover? If I work her even a bit, she’ll tell me everything.

“Kuk...”

-Let’s see, how much I’ve made her tell me, that lately her hips are sore...

“Ok, stop. Let us not cross the conversational barrier as siblings.”

-If she said she can’t even keep her head straight, oppa, you must be a genius!

“Ku akkk-!!”

-Hehehe!

Hyun-ji’s wicked laughter bothered my ears.

Just how far did you push Min-jeong for her to tell you! She’s my little sister but she really is a dangerous woman.

“What is it you want?”

Then Hyun-ji, who has been confident up until now, changed her tone.

-Oppa! Seriously, help me!

“Move out?”

-Yeah! I want to go up and live in Seoul on my own!

“You living alone without anyone to keep you in check, just picturing it is scary.”

-Hing, I really am going to try hard. Even now, I’m trying to get a job and I’m applying here and there.

“Then do it.”

-Give me some money.

“Get lost please.”

-Ang, oppa!

“Don’t nag me.”

-Help me out, I’m your only baby sister!

“If it’s like this with one, I wonder how bad two would’ve been.”

-Seriously! Help me out.

It is a video call and it made it all the more annoying. The tantrum throwing and nagging Hyun-ji, I have to see it with my eyes.

“I heard mom and noona said no too? Then what does that make me look like if I help you?”

-Those two are trying to get me to fry chicken!

“Do it, fry chicken. At your level, there aren’t a lot of ways to make it big.”

-Isn’t it too much to cut off all my other options and make it so that that’s all I can do? I need to be given a chance!

“All this time, did you not have enough chances? Even your college grades are only a 2.0, right?”

-I’m going to change from now on. Please give me one chance, huh?

Ah, Hyun-ji really lays on the sophistry.

Oddly, I see where she's coming from and had nothing to say in response.

"I'll think about it and decide."

-... okay.

I finished the call and let out a sigh of relief. Trying to converse with Hyun-ji when she wants something is a tiresome thing.

That night, having come back from her first day at work, Min-jeong went to a welcome party and came home late.

As soon as she came home she ran to me and immediately kowtowed.

"Oppa, I made a mistake."

She must have heard from Hyun-ji.

"Do you know you've done wrong?"

"Yes."

With such a pitiful expression, I couldn't say anything to her.

"Why are you so weak with Hyun-ji."

"It's not that I'm weak..."

So goes Min-jeong's story.

Originally, her and Hyun-ji and Ji-hyun, no matter where they went they stuck together, the trio. She said something like their hobby was divulging each other's secrets?

If you have something you wish to keep secret, the other two friends will make you spill no matter what.

"That's why we don't have secrets from each other and that's why we are so close."

"Yeah, I got that. Hyun-ji called me a genius."

“Kyak! I’m sorry! Ji-hyun started saying something about what it’s like at nighttime... ang!”

Min-jeong grabbed her head in misery.

Just like that, the time for repentance was over and Min-jeong suddenly said.

“But oppa, what are you going to do about helping Hyun-ji gain her independence?”

“You’ve been had by Hyun-ji again.”

“Hehe, yes.”

That Hyun-ji, seriously.

“If she comes up to Seoul and has no one to keep her in check, she’s bound to go crazy, how could I let her?”

“She won’t, oppa.”

“I know her well.”

“You and me both are going to work, and Hyun-ji is hard at work looking for a job. With us two working, you think she’ll go out by herself? Even if it’s for us, she’s going to try hard.”

That makes sense too.

But I got the feeling this too was because Hyun-ji made her rehearse it.

After thinking about it a little for, I decided and sent a text to Hyun-ji.

[Me: Hey]

[Hyun-ji: Yes, dear brother!]

[Me: -_-;; I have a studio, you can use that]

[Hyun-ji: Really? YES!!]

[Hyun-ji: But just a studio?]

[Me: You should just bury your bones in Cheonan]*

(TN: He's saying to just stay and die in Cheonan since the studio isn't good enough for her.)

[Hyun-ji: No, no, thank you for the studio! Arigato!]

[Me: I will give you one check card so use that for living expenses and I'm going to check everything you use it for so if you use it for something else or make a withdrawal, that instant, you're done]

[Hyun-ji: Hmph, got it]

[Me: For now, we'll see how it goes for half a year, until June. If you make no progress by then, you are the Cheonan chicken fryer, ok?]

[Hyun-ji: ok, ok, I love you ♥]

[Me: shut up]

Then Min-jeong got a text. Min-jeong laughed and showed it to me.

[Hyun-ji: good job, my girl]*

(TN: This was written in English.)

What a fuss. Goodness.

I don't know if this is a good thing and just sighed.

By tomorrow, mom and noona will have heard this news and will say something.

"I'm just going to say this, but we can never invite Hyun-ji to our place."

"Yes."

"You promise?"

“Aww, I got it.”

Again, again, with the aegyo in her voice, this habit, I’m sure she learned it from Hyun-ji. Or Hyun-ji picked it up from Min-jeong.



Like that, 60 days passed.

The time, for the exam, I got plenty of the.357 magnum bullets and 7.62 bullets and stuffed them into the spatial storage space.

The spatial storage space is up to entry level 4 and the space has grown considerably. Even with plenty of bullets, there was space left.

Just in case I get bored, I put in the violin and music books.

‘Time to go.’

I texted Min-jeong and lie and said I have to go on a business trip. Then I went to a nearby hotel.

If I do die during the exam, Min-jeong will wake up with me dead right next to her. I don’t want to give her that kind of trauma.

I think maybe and decide to leave a last will on my smartphone for my family and Min-jeong.

‘Done.’

The preparations are done.

I don’t want to anxiously wait for the time to go by until the exam time is here.

“Hello and welcome.”

I’m so sick of seeing this baby angel, and he greets me.

“Board retrieval.”

Familiarly, I summon my board and check the exam.

-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-Class: 16

-Karma: 0

-Mission: protect the brown mountain elves

-Time limit: 12 months

My face completely crumples.

“A year, again!”

“That’s right.”

“Isn’t this too much?”

“You must know that there are examinees with far longer exams.”

I recall Neilson Aslan and I shut my mouth. I am definitely better off than him.

“Doesn’t a longer exam give you a good opportunity to grow?”

“I don’t get the feeling this time will be safe like last time?”

“You’ve had it easy twice so now it’s time to pay the price.”

Protect the elves.

From who?

‘The enemy was the undead.’

The Bastian enemy from the north will fall by Odin’s army’s war.

The silver clan to the east isn’t really a danger to the elves.

The leader, Leon Silver, is rather intelligent and strengthened the clan but I am sure they do not recognize their inferiority.

Then the only enemy left is the zombies climbing up the cliff.

‘Then all the things that have unfolded thus far can only point to the black wizard that is moving the undead.’

The overall flow of the exams, I have thought of it, and something came to mind so I asked the baby angel.

“What do I have to do to block the undead?”

“I’m not sure?”

“It’s the Tree of Life, isn’t it?”

“I’m not sure.”

“The Tree of Life is the center of this exam, isn’t it? That’s why the last ones, the 4th and 5th turn, were about saving the Tree of Life. Aren’t I correct?”

“I’m not sure?”

I stared straight at the baby angel.

The baby angel, like always, was just jolly.

It was like always, impossible to tell what the angel is thinking by judging his expression.

Then again, it’s not a human, but an angel.

But I think I’m right.

Chapter 82

Back to the Arena (Part 2)

I passed through the exam door and I appeared at the top of the Tree of Life.

The great top that felt like it touches the sky, the Tree of Life, seeing it, I felt a sense of welcome familiarity. It's been 60 days.

It was only early dawn and the village was quiet.

It was peaceful.

Why are the humans in such angst to harm these peacefully living elves?

'I'm sure it's because there is something to be gained from it.'

The opponents are the undead.

The dead ones have been revived not as the living nor the dead, being controlled by a dark magician using his evil magic.

Odin said that dark magic was derived from trying to figure out the secrets of immortality but was now considered a forbidden art.

Death, resurrection, immortality, life.

When I connected those keywords to the elves, naturally what came to mind was the Tree of Life.

The elves have a dim sense of it. There was that time Derrick mentioned the undead coming for the Tree of Life.

He said that because the zombies are instinctively drawn to life, that they are immensely attracted to the Tree of Life, which has the greatest life force.

But the dark magician who controls those zombies probably have their eyes on the

Tree of Life for another reason.

Probably for resurrection or immortality, a goal related to that.

“You are up early.”

I suddenly heard someone behind me.

The middle-aged elf warrior.

It was Derrick.

“Sir Derrick!”

“Why are you so excited to see me?”

“I’m just happy to see you.”

It has been 60 days since I last saw you.

“Huh. Anyway, since you are awake now, let’s get an early start today.”

“Do you always wake up at this time?”

“I do.”

“Then I will also wake up at this time!”

“Do as you wish.”

Derrick and I headed off together.

The purpose of today, just like before, was to look after the small Tree of Life. And to also fight the cliff-climbing zombies.

Running alongside Derrick, I felt a small sense of accomplishment.

After clearing the 5th exam, with the karma I earned, I increased the limit of my physical strength buff.

Intermediate level 5.

That was the limit of how high I could get without having mastered the aura control.

And the intermediate level 5 effect was the limit of an elf's physique.

Thus, compared to the best elf warrior Derrick, I am not falling behind at all.

Of course, that is only when speaking in terms of stamina.

"You are keeping up well."

Even Derrick was amazed at my improved fitness.

"I have improved a lot lately."

"But you have improved a lot from yesterday."

"Have I?"

"Regardless, it is impressive."

"Hehehe."

"Then starting today, you will be able to properly run."

"Excuse me?"

"Try to keep up."

After that, Derrick shot off like a shot arrow.

"Huk!"

I was astonished.

I had been running at my full speed. But he is moving much faster than that, I couldn't believe it.

'But haven't I reached the physical limit of the elves?'

How Derrick is running faster than me is the real question though.

Anyway, catching up was the first thing I have to do.

“Divine Protection of the Wind!”

Eventually, I run using the Divine Protection of the Wind and was able to keep up running alongside Derrick.

Lightly, lightly, every time I took a step, the wind that surrounded me helped to push my body forward.

Its nearly like taking a jump, but instead was a big stride. I ran with and was easily able to match Derrick’s pace.

As I ran, I looked at Derrick.

‘He doesn’t look different in any way?’

His running posture is the same as before. I cannot, for the life of me, figure out what the difference was compared to me.

When we get to the small Tree of Life, I asked Derrick.

Derrick explained it to me.

“It is similar to how humans harness aura.”

“It is aura control?”

“Yes. Humans apply aura to get stronger, like that, elves know how to use the power of nature. Spirit summons is also another way of using power of nature.”

“So that is why the Tree of Life is precious to elves.”

“That is right. In a place where the power of nature does not occur, our elves’ power greatly diminishes.”

Even if one could harness aura control, without aura, it is pointless.

Elves without the Tree of Life would be in that situation.

“When this tree is grown, everyone’s power will become stronger?”

“Yes. With two Trees of Life, we will have nothing to fear.”

In that case, the most important thing for me in the 6th exam will be to grow this tiny Tree of Life.

The 4th and 5th exams and now the 6th exam, this continuation, looking at the overall context, I can see the answer.

‘More so than fighting together with the elves, this may have the biggest effect.’

It doesn’t matter that I’ve gotten much stronger, amongst the stronger warrior elves, having me lend an extra hand in fighting, how much help could that be?

That is probably why even if I cleared the exam that way, I probably won’t get too much karma from it.

‘Yep, this is it. It was just like in the first exam, using your head more so than fighting will give out a higher prize.’

First, I created two flames of life and blew them into the small Tree of Life.

Eat lots and grow big.

The small Tree of Life, as if in a reply of thanks, shook a small twig. I’m sure it was from the wind though.

Then I look happily at Derrick.

“Kim, you are the greatest gift given to us from mother nature.”

“Huk!”

“Huh? Why are you being like that?”

“Uh, nothing. I am just so moved.”

Derrick smiled.

Whew, I almost fell in love with him just now. He says such things that target my heart!
Derrick, you devilish elf!

“Now, if it is all done, let’s go.”

“Yes.”

We headed towards the cliff.

Atop the cliff, other older elves are already waiting. This place, in shifts for 24 hours a day, is always guarded.

“Hey, Kim!”

“Let’s do good again today.”

“You’ve improved greatly lately.”

Now, I was friendly with everyone and everyone said a thing or two with a sense of friendliness.

Good, today I will show everyone my improved skills.

I raised the Divine Protection of the Wind to entry level 5, and thanks to practicing the violin, my reflex skill was intermediate level 2.

‘The time limit is 12 months. Thus, protecting the elves for 12 months will clear the mission.’

A long period of 12 months, I can’t recklessly use my bullets.

Of course, my spacial storage space was raised to entry level 4 and thanks to that, the virtual space has enlarged and the magnum bullets for the guns are stacked high inside.

But with the endless number of zombie hordes attacking every day for 12 months, those bullets won’t be enough.

‘I should save the dual guns unless a really important fight breaks out.’

Then, I began to fight.

“Kuah!”

“Uhak!”

“Uhahh!”

The corpses shouted as they clambered up the cliffside.

“I’ll go first.”

Derrick started.

Going straight down towards the zombies, pulling out his dual swords.

At the first moment of contact, he swung around both swords simultaneously.

Chwa Chwak-!

“Kuhak!”

“Kuah!”

With their arms or legs or head cut off, the zombies fell down.

Derrick stepped on zombies that were climbing up and slowed his own descent. The zombies that had become his stepping stones fell down too.

Slowing himself by stepping on the falling zombies, in that time, Derrick continually swung his swords with unsurpassed skill.

Seeing Derrick in action for the first time in 60 days, my mouth dropped open and I couldn’t help but be amazed.

‘How high does my reflex skill need to be do be able to copy that?’

Probably the advanced level at least?

“I will go next.”

I stepped up.

“Oh, you, Kim?”

“I’ll watch this!”

“Good luck.”

The older elves encouraged me.

I smiled and used the Divine Protection of the Wind and ran towards the zombies.

With both feet aimed below, I gained my balance with both arms and landed properly.

The second I landed within the zombie group, I used all my strength and kicked beneath me.

It’s a dropkick using even the speed of my landing.

Kuang-!

An incredible wind pressure was expelled from around me. Because the Divine Protection of the Wind level has increased, its strength has definitely gotten stronger.

The small typhoon that began in my feet, swept the zombies.

“Kuruu!”

“Uack!”

“Kuack!”

A group of eight zombies got swept up and flew off together.

With one hand, I grabbed a crevice and, while hanging, I continued to kick.

Each time, the force that came out dropped two or three zombies.

I was dropping zombies like a duster drops dust.

“Oh!”

“Incredible!”

“That was a great kick!”

The praises shot out from the elves above the cliff.

I got excited and as I stepped on zombies again, I traversed across the cliff.

The zombies became my stepping stones and fell in droves.

Of course, I cannot yet maneuver the landscape like Derrick and have to grab the cliff with my hand.

Actually, isn't it the abnormal to move about freely on a cliffside with two feet!

Other elves joined the fray and the zombies got swept as if by a broom.

After fighting a long while, the zombie horde finally halted the attack.

“Whew, finally it's done.”

“Today in particular I felt like there were a lot more undead, is it just a feeling?”

“It is not just a feeling. I felt that too.”

The elves exchanged conversation as they rested.

The fight was won but everyone's voices were still filled with worry.

Derrick must be thinking something as he was just staring down where the zombies fell from.

“What are you thinking?”

“I am thinking about the undead.”

“There were more than usual today?”

Derrick nodded his head.

“I don’t know if this is just a coincidence.”

“I am sure it is not a coincidence.”

Derrick’s gaze fixed upon me.

I spoke.

“I heard that the one controlling the undead is a dark magician.”

“I am sure it is.”

From his speech, it didn’t sound like Derrick knew that much about dark magic.

“If the zombies have increased, it means the dark magician has sent more than the usual amount.”

“Indeed.”

“Think about it. Up to now, the dark magician has sent zombies to attack here every day. And each time, we repelled the attack.”

Derrick nodded his head.

I continued to speak.

“We are fighting with the zombies but the real enemy is the dark magician. Not simple zombies, but a thinking human.”

“Yes.”

“The magician kept attacking and kept failing, wouldn’t a human then try a method different than usual?”

“..”

“Probably, the reason the magician attacked the same way repeatedly, it probably thought that at some point you would grow tired.”

“You mean to see the magician was waiting for us to exhaust ourselves?”

“Yes, but continuing that tedious fighting repeatedly, the dark magician lost its patience first. He realized that continuing like that would see no end.”

“...that thinking makes sense. Humans have shorter lifespans than us and an equally shorter lack of patience.”

“So, in order to change something, the numbers were increased today.”

At those words, Derrick’s face became grim and I said one more thing.

“But this is just my thinking.”

Because my thinking could be wrong.

But Derrick nodded his head.

“No, Kim, your words are right. Thinking that way fits the situation.”

“Does it?”

“Then Kim, let me ask you one thing. What do you think we should do?”

“Excuse me? Wouldn’t that be something the mothers decide?”

“Yes, the ultimate decision will be made by them. What I want is an opinion that will aid in that decision. You are a human like this dark magician and having another human’s opinion would be helpful.”

‘Hmm.’

It is an opinion that will be delivered to the mothers too and I had to think hard about what I would say.

Chapter 83

Odin's Ability (Part 1)

After thinking it through carefully, I spoke.

"First, our power should be concentrated here."

"You want to enlist the young ones here?"

"Yes, the way I see it, I think that the greatest danger will occur here."

It's a simple argument.

Baron Bastian is more than busy going to war with Odin, and the Silver Clan isn't much.

The problem area.

Here, this place where I am getting a bad feeling from, is where we have to strengthen our forces.

"The dark magician is increasing the troops so we should do the same here and increase our power."

"We are plenty as of yet."

"You mean yet?"

"..."

"Of course, I am not doubting your skills, Derrick. But how about thinking about it like this?"

"What else?"

Derrick showed interest in my words.

“They concentrated here and attacked and kept on failing. Today, they increased in number and ultimately failed again.”

“They did.”

“Then what will the dark magician think? Won’t the dark magician then think to attack from a different point?”

“There is no other spot. If not this cliff, the other way is much longer.”

“That is the weak point.”

“What?”

“They will keep hitting us here and focus our attention here, and cut through an unguarded weak spot. If it were me, that is what I would do.”

I continued to explain.

“Since the attack has failed anyway, don’t you think it would be used at least as a diversion? No matter how long the other path is.”

“Hmm!”

Derrick groaned out loud.

“Your words are right. I must return immediately to the village.”

It sounds like he is going to deliver my opinions to the mothers.

“I will go with you.”

“That would be good.”

We quickly headed back to the village.

Because the 30-minute cool time had ended, I was able to use the Divine Protection of the Wind and was able to keep up with Derrick’s full speed.

As the level goes up, the duration goes up and the cool time decreases.

I momentarily regretted it, having raised my teleportation skill instead of using that karma for investing more in the Divine Protection of the Wind.

‘No, there will come a day where the teleportation comes in handy.’

No matter, it’s a skill I raised for escaping danger.

As soon as we arrived at the village, Derrick and I headed for the mothers gathered under the Tree of Life.

The mothers were busy chatting away and their gazes gathered to us.

“Oh, honey!”

The eldest mother was extremely glad and ran towards us.

The woman ran towards her husband like an arrow and Derrick calmly answered by brushing her hair, nothing could be nicer to see.

Seeing this, I miss Min-jeong.

‘At the very least, they’ve been a couple for 200 years and their relationship is so good.’

Then again, a man like Derrick, that amount of love seems normal. I fall for him sometimes... hmm hmm! I took some deep breaths to calm down and cleanse my mind.

“Why have you come back so soon?”

“I have something to tell you.”

“Oh my, something just for me?”

“It would be good for everyone to hear it.”

“Oh goodness, while everyone is listening...”

Whatever she is imagining, the eldest mother is blushing.

Whatever she is thinking, it’ll be less than that.

“The movements of the undead have become more and more suspicious.”

The eldest mother’s facial expression changed to disappointment.

The other mothers that were anticipating a good show also had a stunned expression on their faces.

“As for the specifics, you can listen to Kim.”

Now everyone was looking at me.

I once again delivered the talk I told Derrick. This time, I was able to give a more organized explanation than before.

“For now, the most important problem is the undead from the southwest?”

“Yes.”

“For us, humans are scarier. Humans clearly tried to kidnap our children and, in an attempt to avoid being spotted, used sly means to achieve their goals.

“I understand. As a human myself, I am embarrassed for my kind.”

“I do not say such things to hear those kinds of words from you. We cannot, even in the slightest, let go of the surveillance to the north. There was that time Elise almost got taken as well.”

At that, I rolled the thoughts around my head once more.

I organized my thoughts and replied.

“About that, I have two things to say.”

“You may speak.”

“First, clearly the biggest and most dangerous problem the village is facing is due to the undead. But on that side, Derrick and many other heroic warriors are fighting there so we haven’t been afraid of it.”

“.....”

“But you must have all been very shocked when Elise was nearly kidnapped. I understand. That lovable child, taken by shameless people, was nearly almost lost. “

From amongst the mothers came a sigh of lament and relief.

Thinking of that time must still sting. This is the mother elves’ strength and weakness.

“But because you have been influenced by that kind of psychological scar, I think perhaps the importance of matter has been incorrectly placed.”

Everyone was surprised and I continued to speak.

“For just a few small time human kidnappers, invading is not a problem. Forbidding children from going off out of the village alone without adult permission, and even if there were a kidnapping, forming a chase team to get them back takes care of that.”

“Ah.....!”

“But the undead are different. If the defense is broken and the Tree of Life is damaged, a disastrous situation, so bad I cannot even say aloud, will happen. So, what side is more important?”

The mothers instinctive love making them feel that every child is precious, because of it they couldn’t see the bigger problem.

“If kidnapped, we can rescue the child back...”

“I have never thought of that.”

“Shameless humans just putting a hand on our children was unbearably scary to think about.”

“A pursuit team, that is a good idea.”

“It’ll be taken care of to leave the children up to the women?”

The mothers started to stir and talk.

A little while later, the eldest mother spoke.

“Those were very good points. We will leave it to the women and organize a separate pursuit team.”

I commented.

“If a child under a women protector goes missing, immediately notifying the pursuit team system would be good to have.”

“Yes, of course! That is a good idea.”

And with those two pieces of advice, the children’s safety was recovered. Those that were guarding the north can be placed to the southwest with the undead.

The whole things went by without a hitch.

The mothers made their decisions and gathered everyone in the village, and notified them of these decisions.

“It is a good idea.”

“It’s Kim’s idea.”

“Kim is a genius. Figures.”

“So, I just take care of my siblings then?”

Everyone nodded and agreed that it was a good plan. My reputation ended up getting even better because of this.

The young men, especially, seem particularly pleased.

All this while, the southwest area had been guarded by the more adult men, and now they have the chance to join that.

Everyone wanted the chance to fight bravely for their village.

Thus, the southwest border was strengthened and blocking the undead became a lot easier.

Derrick enlisted the young elf men to a fighting unit patrol. In case by way of a different

path, to detect undead infiltrating that way.

Because of the near palpable danger.

The elf children for the most part, did as they were told and played within the confines of the village.

Actually, now, the children lost interest of things beyond the village anymore. They were crazy about playing tag.

Every day, I put two flames of life into the small Tree of Life.

Then I went to fight the undead along the cliffside. In the afternoon I trained in games of tag and late at night before I went to bed, I practiced the violin.

I got rid of the violin's sound with Sylph's help and practiced quietly, unknown to anyone.

It was because I felt that if the elves showed an interest in the violin, it'll become bothersome for me. They may all want to try their hand at it. It seemed pretty obvious they would.

I ended up spending nearing a month doing this. A monotonous, but devoted, practice every single day.

"Humans-!"

A big noise came from the village.

That noise was delivered all the way to the cliffside where we were fighting the undead, and Derrick and I sprinted back to the village.

The atmosphere in the village was chaotic.

Of course, the male elves who have returned from patrol, the women too, were armed.

The children must all have been inside their homes, not a single one could be seen.

The group that appeared in the village was three humans, and what looked to be 10 emaciated elves.

Two older women, three males, and the others were five younger elves. All must have suffered, all their faces looked grim.

All three humans were armed but not wielding them.

And amongst them, was a very familiar face.

“Odin?”

At my familiarity, Odin looked towards me, surprised.

“Mr. Hyun-ho Kim?”

The elves looked at us and chattered.

“Do they know each other?”

“Kim seems to know him.”

“He’s good with Kim?”

“If he’s close to Kim, I guess he’s not an enemy.”

“Let’s see for now.”

The elves’ strong hostility loosened up a lot.

Haha, it was because I have gathered such good faith here.

Odin looked around at the elves, and then said to me.

“It looks like they trust you.”

“Yes, they do. But these elves that have come with you...”

Odin nodded his head.

“They were slaves. This is the number I was able to get by using all the funds I had available for it.”

Then, the mothers appeared. Next to the eldest mother stood Derrick, like a body guard.

The eldest mother asked me.

“Kim, do you know each other.”

“Yes, he is my friend. He is trust-worthy, do not worry.”

Odin walked forward and greeted the eldest mother.

“I am count Odin from Ulpenberg/Wolfenbourg.”

“What has brought you here? And those elves you have come with...”

The 10 elves saw the eldest mother and their faces froze up. I can only imagine what lives they must have had.

“I heard that my friend Kim Hyun-ho had made friends with the elves and has been living amongst you.”

“If you are Kim’s friend, I suppose you are not an enemy.”

“Yes. The elves that have come with me were living as slaves and I have rescued them.”

“Is what he is saying true?”

At the eldest mother’s question, the elves nodded.

“That human bought us.”

“He said he would take us to the brown mountain in the east.”

“He is a wonderful human.”

The older three women elves each had a say.

The eldest mother nodded.

“I cannot imagine how much you have all suffered. This place is safe, stay with us from

now on.”

“Thank you.”

“Thank you very much.”

The elves that Odin brought, their eyes lit up.

Spending time with elves, I could feel how much they love nature.

Living as a human’s slave, I wonder how much they have suffered.

They probably didn’t task them with heavy labor but just being far removed from nature, humans could not know how miserable that is for them.

“We are very grateful for what you have done. But I am not sure what kind of benefit that deed was to you.”

At the eldest mother’s words, Odin replied.

“First, it was as a present to my dear friend Kim Hyun-ho who loves the elves, and secondly, I want to discuss the possibility of a treaty with you.”

Chapter 84

Odin's Abilities (Part 2)

The mothers, first of all, took the 10 elves Odin has brought.

The young female elves took them away to their homes to rest and to give them food.

Odin and I went with the mothers to go to a quiet spot and have a conversation.

"First of all, using your own money to save our kind, we thank you once again for your kindness and goodwill."

"Please do not mention it. As a human too, I am ashamed of such cruelty."

"Did you say Count Odin of Ulpenburg? With a high position amongst the humans, I do not know the reason you would want a relationship with us when we are not affiliated at all. What benefit is that to you?"

"The world is becoming more and more chaotic, and protecting yourself on your own is becoming more difficult. I think the same can be said for you as well."

"Yes."

The eldest mother completely agreed.

Odin said.

"More so, we have a common enemy."

"A common enemy?"

"It is Baron Bastian. I have just finished preparations to go to war against Baron Bastian."

"Bastian is the human set up to the north of here."

“Yes, he is.”

“You want our help in attacking him?”

Odin shook his head.

“Not so. I have no difficulty at all in dealing with Baron Bastian.”

“You do look the part.”

Derrick, who had been quiet, finally spoke.

“You are the strongest one of all the humans I have ever met.”

“That is an honor.

Odin smiled.

The mothers and I were surprised.

Derrick was the longest living elf on the brown mountain.

And he said he is the strongest human he has ever seen.

Odin is an incredible examinee that has cleared all 20 of his exams thus far. I cannot fathom just how strong he is.

“Then why is it you want our alliance?”

“It is because I want to work together to handle the future dangers we cannot yet see.”

Said Odin.

“Baron Bastian is not my match, but I do not know why he would fight me when he knows that. I think there is someone much bigger standing in the background.”

At those words, the mothers gathered and started discussing.

I too was deep in thought.

Let's think.

The current circumstances, the Silver clan lycanthropes and baron Bastian have made some kind of deal.

They probably see the elves as their joint target.

The ambitious Leon Silver is probably thinking of expanding his silver clan territory into the elves' brown mountain.

And Baron Bastian probably wants to capture all the elves and sell them as slaves and make a grand profit.

Then add the black magician who is controlling the undead, into this mix.

The Silver clan, baron Bastian, and the black magician, those three combined and attacking the elves, they can all get what they want that way.

'That's it.'

I organized my thoughts before I said.

"I have something I want to say."

"Go ahead, Kim."

"Yes, what Mr. Odin has said, the danger we don't yet see, I think that is the black magician."

"Black magician?"

"Yes, I am pretty sure I know what the silver clan and baron Bastian want from targeting the elves. The silver clan wants territory, baron Bastian wants elf slaves."

"Cruel things."

"Shameless have joined forces."

The mothers were angry.

I continued to speak.

“The problem is what the black magician wants. And I think that’s the Tree of Life.”

“The Tree of Life?”

“Yes, I heard the evil spell that makes the undead came about from research from immortality. In that case, the Tree of Life that is full of life force, wouldn’t it make the best research specimen for that?”

“It can be thought of that way, I see.”

Odin nodded his head and agreed.

I continued.

“There is something I would like to ask. Before I came, the Tree of Life was getting sick, when did that begin?”

“Why do you ask that?”

The eldest mothers asked.

“I want to know if the Tree of Life getting sick was due to natural causes or if the black magician put some sort of curse or something of that sort.”

“...!”

The mothers were all in shock.

“It wasn’t a natural decline, was it?”

“I thought so too. I think that’s why we never believed that it was dying.”

“It wasn’t a natural cause so of course we could not find the reason.”

“Kim’s deductions are right.”

The mothers were all chatting at the same time, it suddenly looked like a women’s association, and it flustered Odin.

“Is it always like this?”

“Yes, it’s always like this. You will have to get used to it.”

“It is a fun ruling system.”

“When you get used to it, it just makes you sigh.”

The agony of man having to watch the women chatter...

After a long while of chatter, a decision was made.

“Our decision is that if the three of them have joined forces, then we too will need an alliance. Count Odin of Ulpenburg, we will form an alliance with you.”

“It is a wise choice.”

Odin shook hands with the eldest mother.

So, the two decided to join forces and then Odin said.

“I have one request, could I see these undead? I want to see how dangerous the undead are.”

“Would you like to join us in the fight for one day?”

Asked Derrick.

Odin smiled and nodded his head.

“That sounds good. I haven’t had a good chance to practice my skills lately.”

I decided to go too.

It’s a chance for me to see how good Odin’s skills are.

Together, we headed for the southwest cliff.



“There sure are plenty of them.”

Those were Odin’s thoughts on the horde of zombies ambling up the cliff.

“Have you always fought such numbers?”

“Recently, they have increased a lot.”

Replied Derrick.

The elves that were guarding the cliff were very interested about this newly appeared Odin.

Everyone was curious about his abilities.

Perhaps he had caught on to that, Odin smiled and took out his sword from his hip sheath.

“I suppose it is time for my hazing.”

“Whenever you are ready.”

“Is it okay for the cliffside to break a little?”

At those words, I was completely surprised, and Derrick pointed with his chin to the other elves.

The elves receded from the cliffside.

“Go ahead.”

“I shall.”

Odin closed his eyes and seemed to focus himself on his sword.

Then.....

Paaaat!

A blue halo from his sword, like a heat shimmer, started to swell.

“That, what is that?”

“He is focusing aura into the weapon.”

Replied Derrick.

“Is something like that possible?”

“That human can do more than that. Just watch.”

The blue heat shimmer coming from the sword eventually became a solid mass.

“Aura sword. It has been a long time since I have seen that.”

Said Derrick.

“Is an aura sword something incredible?”

“It is said that if your aura control skill is able to reach a dramatic extreme, that that is possible. I have only seen that once, a very long time ago. Amongst the humans that attacked us, there was one that could do that.”

As soon as Derrick finished talking, Odin jumped down the cliff.

Odin went straight down towards the zombies and swung his sword around.

The aura sword swung in their direction, with a wide berth.

That after effect was shocking.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwang – !!

The aura’s storm swept up the zombies.

The strength of the hit broke a line of rocks and created a rockslide. The landslide took more zombies with it.

So with a single blow, Odin easily took care of over hundreds of zombies.

'Is that a human?'

I was astonished.

At that level, he's practically a walking weapon. It is no different than if he were to be holding a missile on his belt instead of a sword!

"Whew, that was refreshing."

Odin came atop the cliff with a refreshed face.

"That was incredible."

"Thank you. Now, could I see your abilities?"

"I shall show you."

Derrick pulled out both his swords.

I worried a little bit.

Derrick's technique is indeed impressive but compared to the enormous power that Odin just showed us, the impact might look shabby.

But that concern of mine was apparently needless.

"Kasa."

Derrick summoned a spirit.

His Kasa was a grand fire giant.

A huge fire spirit, at 5 meters tall!

The commanding figure was ablaze, it was like a demon beast from revelations.

"A superior level spirit."

Odin was shaking with excitement.

‘That’s a superior spirit?’

For a moment, I remembered my own Kasa.

A Kasa whose body has grown and is wagging its massive tail.

Kuk, no matter how much I think about it, it’s not as cool as Derrick!

Derrick then showed us something even cooler.

The fire giant and Derrick combined into one body.

Kasa’s flames seeped into Derrick’s body, they were drawn inside, and disappeared.

Instead, hot flames started to spew from all over Derrick. From his breath, came fire.

Derrick jumped below to the cliff.

“Ku haaab!”

With a strong shout, he wielded his dual swords.

Kwa kwa kwang – kwa lu lu lung! Hwa lu lu luk – !

It made fireworks.

In all directions, hot flames abound. Are those waterfall flames?

Below the clifftop, flames flowed like a river.

“Kuahh!”

“Kulululu!”

“Kuaak!”

“Uhakkk!”

Zombies were melting. In an instant, hundreds of them become a heap of ashes and died.

After the firework celebration, there wasn't a single zombie left clinging to the cliff.

"My goodness..."

That is the power of spirit summons?

I thought of spirit summons and weapons as discrete and separate. And up to now I thought Derrick's skills were in his dual swords, not spirit summons.

But seeing the great impact of the dual swords and the spirit combined, I feel as if I have been introduced to a new world.

'Am I able to combine the guns and spirit summons/'

I must.

I thought of the Mosin-Nagant and double guns as support tools, and the spirit summons as a useful skill for lots of situations.

I thought of them as different tools for different things.

But I realized that if I kept thinking that way, I could never become like Derrick.

Build a well for one of the two things or use both as one thing.

I chose the latter as my future path.

'I've been thinking of the spirit summons too carelessly up to now. At least starting now, I should be experimenting with it more.'

I deemed that to be my task for this 6th turn exam.

"It's been a while since I've seen your skills."

When Derrick returned, he was flooded with compliments.

"That was great!"

"Definitely Derrick."

Derrick just smiled at it.

These guys, everything up to now was just some exercise.

Now that I think of it, all this time fighting, no one had used their spirit summons. They haven't used their real skills.

"How was it?"

Derrick asks Odin.

"It's the first time I've ever seen something that great. There isn't that much known to the world about elves and spirit summons and it was hard to fathom."

That was true.

Derrick, on his own within the hour, could turn the silver clan into a sea of fire.

But they don't know that which is why they were targeting the elves.

"But there is one weird thing, do this many undead attack every day this way?"

"Interestingly. They have increased lately."

"But to waste that many undead every day, one would need a lot of corpses. And realistically speaking, that is impossible."

When Odin said that, I wondered too.

Acquiring that number of corpses every day, there's no way something like that can be done secretly.

Chapter 85

Exploration (Part 1)

‘That is definitely strange.’

You can’t get that many bodies every day. At the very least, it would be extremely difficult to do so in secret.

Odin then said.

“It probably isn’t a method of acquiring large amounts of corpses daily. In that case, news would have spread, and since black magic is banned, and every nation would take action against that.”

“Then?”

“Up to now, have you have fighting by dropping the climbing zombies?”

“Correct. No need to waste energy.”

“In that case, I can only make one logical conclusion.”

Said Odin.

“Reusing the dropped zombies over and over.”

“Reusing?”

Derrick and the elves, their expressions changed.

“The bottom of this cliff is so far down we cannot see it, when zombies are dropped from this height, wouldn’t they break into pieces at the bottom? Would broken pieces like that still be reusable?”

I asked.

Odin shrugged his shoulders.

“I am not sure. There is no way to know without checking it out. Regardless, getting that many corpses isn’t easy. Even if a whole country were to be moved, no one could do it secretly.”

“Then should we check...”

Mumbled Derrick as he looked below the cliff.

“If you are going to explore it, I would like to join you for that.”

Suggested Odin but Derrick shook his head.

“From now it is our business. There is no need to further trouble yourself.”

“Is that so. However, we are now allied so if you ever need aid, do not hesitate to ask.”

“I will do so.”

After returning to the village, Odin said his goodbyes.

“I must return now.”

“Going back already? Please stay a day before leaving.”

“I regret that I can’t but I cannot be away from my seat anymore. Even so, we are in the middle of war and I have to get back as fast as possible.”

Odin smiled and shook my hand.

“Anyway, thanks to you I had an exciting time. If it weren’t for you, Mr. Hyun-ho Kim, allying with the elves and seeing a superior level spirit summons, all of it would have been impossible.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Like that, Odin left with the two he came with.

I too was thankful towards Odin because he was able to broaden my knowledge

through a special experience.

The Aura Master's Aura Sword.

The true power and use of superior spirit summons.

They are incredible levels that one day I must catch up to.

"Weapon, Neilson H2."

Pat!

Two guns appeared in either hand.

I stared sincerely at my guns.

How can I use this with spirit summons?

The only useful method I can think of right now is to use Sylph and increase accuracy.

If Sylph who is a wind spirit can aid the aiming, no matter the distance I will have a 100% accuracy rate.

But even then, there is no change to the power. The gun is just a gun.

"The magnum bullet is a pretty strong bullet, but looking at it now it seems so meek

Seeing Odin and Derrick's efforts today, guns had become obsolete.

I think maybe it was a bad idea to pick guns as my weapons.

"There is definitely a way."

I hypothesized ways that Sylph and Kasa can be used for shooting.

"Should I use Sylph to make the bullet fly faster?"

But that would use too much effort so it seems ineffective.

Changing the path of the going bullet already uses a lot of summons time as I found

out through trial.

'I have to use the least amount to increase the power the most.'

I think of the fundamentals of a gun.

Pulling the trigger and making the gunpowder ignite and explode, the gunpowder catches on fire and makes gas.

This gas quickly fills the space and with that pressure, the bullet is shot.

That gas pressure can also be used to pull back a breechblock and bolt carrier. The fundamentals of my semi-automatic Neilson H2 is like that.

Hold on?

The explosion and the gas pressure, couldn't Kasa control that?

"Kasa."

-Hek hek hek!

Kasa hadn't been summoned in a while and wagged their tail back and forth. *

(TN: Author didn't specify a gender so Kasa is an "it" for now.)

"Listen carefully."

I explained in general terms the principles of my gun and then gave the order.

"Do you think you can use your power to strengthen the gunpowder's explosion?"

-Mung! (Bark!)

Kasa nodded his head.

"And you can control the gas pressure that comes from the gunpowder explosion?"

This time too, Kasa kept nodding his head.

“Then combust the gunpowder in the chamber faster and the gas pressure, aside from the power needed for the breechblock and bolt carrier, focus the rest all on shooting the bullet. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Basically, not losing even a bit of gas pressure and focusing it on ejecting the bullet.

Often as a culprit behind a broken gun is because the gun can’t take the gas pressure that occurs maybe is what I’m thinking.*

That is because the gas pressure isn’t entirely concentrated on the bullet but lost elsewhere.

Thus, by using Kasa, I can make the bullet more powerful and concurrently decrease durability loss in the guns.

‘Let’s try this.’

“Sylph.”

-Meow?

Sylph was summoned. Kasa and Sylph, once again, started fighting on top of my head for a spot.

“Get rid of all sound.”

-Meow!

Sylph nodded her head.

I aimed my gun towards the sky.

“Kasa, got it?”

-Mung, mung!

Kasa fiercely nodded his head.

I pulled the trigger.

Poo shook!

Thanks to Sylph's noise barrier, the gunshot doesn't ring out and instead all that could be heard was the clean sound of the air being strongly split.

'It's a success.'

The recoil from the gun was much stronger than usual.

With this amount of recoil, I think the power is about twice as strong.

'I can't be satisfied with this much.'

This time, I considered how I will use Sylph too.

After thinking for a while, I got a hint from having Sylph also make our fires.

"Sylph, the instant the gunpowder explodes, can you add more oxygen and increase the explosive power?"

-Meow.

Sylph nodded her head.

'Good!'

A shooting method using both spirits.

Even so, it only uses a small amount of effort.

"Both of you, let's do that, ready?"

-Mung!

-Meow.

The two spirits answered competitively.

I shot once more into the air.

A recoil much stronger than the one just before.

The sound of a bullet sharply cutting the air emanated out!

It's a success this time too.

'I want to use this somewhere!'

I can't wait for tomorrow to come.



The next day, out of the blue, Derrick said.

"I am exploring the bottom of the cliff."

Deciding the very next day, even elf men are different from their female counterparts.

"No matter what, the goal is exploration, I will pick just 5 for the group."

"Amongst those, one is definitely you, I will go too."

"I as well."

"I will go too."

The older elves all had a say.

'Actually, I want to go too.'

Everyone's skills were distinguished, so it doesn't seem like there's room for me to squish in anywhere.

Up until now, I was confident in thinking that amongst them, my skills were decent, but I now realize it was a complete delusion.

Everyone has lived for a long time and probably has achieved the best intermediate spirits or higher, and my spirits are just entry level 6.

I decided to quietly step away.

But then, Derrick asked me.

“Kim, will you go?”

“Huh? Would it be okay for me to?”

“It is not fighting, but exploring. It will be dangerous I’m sure but I am with you so there is not need to worry.”

“There are others here, is there a reason I should especially be included?”

“I think we also need the point of view of a human, not just the perspective of an elf. Not only that, Kim, but you are wise and that will no doubt be of use in the exploration.”

Whoa, he called me wise. I want mom and noona to hear this.

“In that case, I would like to join. I will try my best not to be a hindrance.”

“You do not have to worry about that. Your skills have improved drastically.”

Ah, I got a compliment from Derrick-nim!

I felt like my heart was aflutter. After yesterday, I looked up to Derrick even more.

Including Derrick and I, a 5 person group was decided.

“Cob, could you summon Sylph please.”

“Okay.”

A veteran elf warrior named Cob, about the same age as Derrick, summoned Sylph.

His Sylph is round life form with large wings.

It is a round ball about the size of my face but its wings were big enough to envelop me and then much more.

A peculiar Sylph.

Looking at its size and presence, I think perhaps it is an intermediate spirit.

It definitely looks more incredible than my Sylph, but not as much as Derrick's fire giant. Then intermediate it is.

"Let's go!"

Derrick jumped down first.

All of us jump down one by one in a line. If someone saw, it would probably look like a group suicide.

To get less resistance from the wind, I gathered my arms and folded my body small as best I can.

We built momentum and then kept falling faster and faster.

'This is thrilling!'

The pressure from the air around my entire body is vividly waking my senses. No roller coaster could give this kind of ecstasy.

But then, in the middle of this group fall, Derrick must have discovered something because he flicked his fingers.

Instantly, Cob's Sylph flapped its wings wide.

The wall of wind spread out instantly and caught our bodies.

We halted in midair.

"That."

Derrick pointed to something.

What that was was a giant spider web. Not only was it extreme in size but the thickness was thick like wool.

"A spider web?"

I mumbled.

Derrick spoke.

“It is Arachne’s web.”

“Oh, that...!”

I looked at the glove I have on my hand. This Arachne glove I was gifted from Odin is made of that material.

“There must be Arachne here as well.”

“Was it originally an Arachne’s habitat that got swept up by the undead?”

“Probably so. Beneath the clifftop was originally the Arachnes’ territory is what I have heard. Although we can’t be sure because it’s not in our territory and we haven’t been before.”

“I have heard that from my father too. It was such a long time ago that I had forgotten.”

The four elves exchanged dialogue.

Then I said.

“Can I go close and inspect it?”

“Sure.”

Cob had Sylph move me closer to the web.

I extended my hand to the cliff wall and strongly grabbed a rock edge that was jutting out.

Uh du duk!

It was a rock with a crack already in it and with my strength, part of it crumbled.

I took the broken rock piece and threw it at the web.

Chul lung!

Surprisingly, the rock bounced right off of the web.

“What?”

“What is that?”

The elves were surprised.

A normal web should have caused the rock to stick to it.

The rock piece should have been stuck in the web or the web wouldn't be able to take the weight and would have ripped.

But this web didn't do that.

Someone had changed its properties and had gotten rid of the viscosity of the web.

“Looks like work of the black magician.”

“That is?”

“Yes, if someone hadn't taken an action to the web, there is no way that the viscosity would have disappeared.”

“That is true.”

Derrick agreed with what I said.

“And this verifies it, but you said below is the Arachne territory?”

“Yes.”

“But we've never seen it ourselves.”

Replied the elves.

From that, I was able to make my conclusion.

“I think that the Arachne that used to live here have gone over to the black magician's side.”

Chapter 86

Exploration (Part 2)

“If the magician has the undead Arachne, they would be far stronger than the zombies made from human corpses, why has the magician not used them yet?”

Asked Derrick.

I said.

“It means that side hasn’t shown us their power yet. And that the magician has used the Arachne for a different purpose.”

“A different purpose?”

I pointed to the web.

“Why do you think the magician put a non-viscous web here?”

“...I am not sure on that.

“It is to reuse.”

At my words, Derrick’s eyes grew wide. I continued speaking.

“The magician put up all these webs everywhere to safely catch the falling zombies. So that the bodies can be safely preserved and used to attack again.”

“...Let us check it out for now.”

At Derrick’s words, Cob has Sylph remove the wind barrier.

We started falling once again.

My hypothesis was correct.

There were webs all along the cliff wall.

There were lots of ripped web, but those were probably from Odin's efforts yesterday.

"Damn it."

Very unlike himself, Derrick swears.

Rightly so.

Up until now, they had fought thinking they were dropping zombies to the floor, but because of that the zombie horde was able to keep attacking.

"We should have explored the cliff from the beginning."

"Yes. If we had seen this sooner, we could have come up with a plan."

"Damn it. We have been wasting our time all this time. We should have sliced them up into pieces as they climbed up."

The elves were full of self-blame and sighed.

I gave them some encouragement.

"I don't think that is true. Because the zombies weren't used up, the black magician kept using the same attack method."

Everyone looked at me with odd faces.

"In the time that bought us, I revived the Tree of Life and was able to grow the small Tree of Life. It was a big benefit to us."

"...I see. Time was on our side."

"Yes."

"That makes sense. Thanks to getting two trees of life, we have gotten stronger."

"Ho, thinking that way, it really wasn't a waste?"

“That’s Kim for you.”

“Using a point we haven’t thought of and understanding the situation differently.”

Cob and the other veteran elves shower me with compliments.

I felt embarrassed and didn’t know what to do with myself but it felt good.

Because it really is awesome being acknowledged by someone.

We continued falling.

I wondered how much time has passed.

“Get ready.”

We each readied our weapons.

“This is a good opportunity to check out what I tested yesterday.”

I was excited for it.

A while later, we reached the ground. The height of the fall really was quite immense.

“Ku ahhh!”

“Ku rururu!”

It was swarming with zombies. Crawling with undead made from human corpses.

“There are no Arachne.”

Said Derrick.

I spoke up.

“It means the zombies made from human corpses are just expendable. Don’t you think the black magician has already left here?”

“Has the magician already left?”

“Yes, look. Aren’t there actually way less zombies compared to what we were thinking there would be? Yesterday, thanks to the two of you obliterating the zombies to the point of not even having a shape anymore, the numbers have been greatly reduced. Because of that, the black magician probably thought it wasn’t possible to continue and has left.”

“Hmm, that is reasonable thinking. Then leaving these zombies here...”

“The magician probably wants to throw us off to the last minute. If there was nothing here when we came down here, we would have known that the attack would be coming somewhere else, and caught on to that right away.”

Then, Cob yelled.

“There is a cave there.”

Everyone looked over to the direction Cob was pointing to.

Really, towards the inner gorge, there was a cave.

“We should check that out.”

“Hold on.”

I stopped Derrick.

“What is it?”

“That cave, aside from that, could there be another opening into it from different side?”

“I am not sure.”

“If that is the case, there is no need for us to check it out. In anticipation of us going in, there is a high chance there is a trap set up there.”

“Kim is right. I will have Sylph go look inside.”

Cob stepped forward.

Derrick nodded his head.

“That sounds good.”

Cob’s Sylph headed into the cave. For now, we were hanging on the cliff and awaiting the scouting results.

Then Sylph returned.

Cob and Sylph must have some kind of connection, he nodded and spoke.

“As Kim said, there are 9 undead Arachne in there.”

“You can converse with your Sylph?”

As I asked, Cob laughed.

“With an intermediate spirit, you have a special method to communicate with them.”

“Wow.....”

If only my spirits could get there, scouting or giving orders would be much easier. I really have to consistently raise my main skill.

“Was there anything else?”

At Derrick’s question, Cob nodded his head.

Derrick pretended to mull it over for a moment then decided.

“Everyone will clean up and we’ll go back. If we leave these things here, the black magician can use them again.”

“I agree.”

“This much is easy.”

“My power can do this in one blow.”

With that, Derrick summoned his Kasa.

A fire giant appeared and assimilated with Derrick. Kasa has seeped into Derrick’s

body and it was now aglow with blue flames.

All the other elves, weapons in hand, summoned their spirits.

“Sylph, Kasa!”

-Meow.

-Mung!

I too summon my two cute spirits and took out my double guns.

“Remember what we practiced yesterday? Let’s try that.”

Sylph and Kasa nodded their heads.

The fight began.

Derrick swirled his sword in an instant and the flames fired randomly.

Hwalulululuk-!

“Kuah!”

“Ahhh!”

“Uhahhh!”

In an instant, a river of fire swept in leaving zombies mingling in a pile of ash!

I shoot my double guns at the zombies that Derrick didn’t kill.

Tang! Tang! Taang! Tang! Tang!”

Every time I shot, the shot surprisingly hit two zombie skulls and the third zombie in the body.

The power has gotten strong enough to hit three zombies per shot!

‘Nice.’

I was excited and shot in every which direction.

In all directions within 10 m, zombies got hit by my gun and fell down.

In no time at all, there were no zombies in the gorge below the cliff.

Lastly, Derrick wielded his sword as he headed for the cave.

“This is the end.”

Kwaaaaa!

The flames that burst from the tip of the gun shot out into the cave.

Giik!

Gik!

Bbiiik!

Bleak screams rang out from inside. It is probably the sound of burning Arachne.

“Now, let’s return.”

The clean was up is done quickly and Derrick decided to head back.

“It feels lacking to go back empty handed, let us gather some spoils of war on the way up.”

At Cob’s words, Derrick laughed and nodded his head.

“Fine.”

“Spoils of war?”

I asked. One veteran elf taught me.

“The spider webs. If we bring some back, the women will love it. It makes good clothing.”

“Ah!”

We, using Cob’s Sylph’s power, gathered the webs spread here and there on the cliff.

The stickiness has been taken out so it was easy to gather.

‘It would be awesome to make this into a shirt and wear it.’

An incredible shirt immune to swords! It would be an impressive piece of defensive equipment that would save my life multiple times over.

We got all the Arachne webs and climbed back to the top of the cliff. The pile of webs were mountain high.

“You have come back earlier than expected?”

“Wow, what is all this?”

“The wife will love it. Is it okay if I take some as well?”

Derrick gestured to it.

“Everyone take as much as you need.”

“Score!”

“Everyone get yours.”

“Don’t be too greedy. What is left we should give to the young ones.”

“Kim, you come get some too. Oh wait, do you not have a woman to make you any?”

At Cob’s words, I couldn’t help but groan a little.

I miss Min-jeong! No, it’s not like she has the skills to take this and turn it into a shirt, but still.

“My wife can make it for you. Kim, what would you like to be made?”

Asked Derrick.

Oh Derrick!

Then, with the eldest mother be making mine? She's the eldest, so she probably has the best skills?

"A shirt to wear inside."

"That is a good choice. Understood."

Derrick gathered my portion of web for me.

And the web that is left was decided to be distributed to the other men.

"All the men will go crazy if these are made into bow thimbles."

"That should be enough."

We all headed back for the village. There was no longer a need for us to guard this cliff.

First, I will rest and then think up more defenses.

The old veteran warrior elves all returned and the mothers came racing towards them.

"Honey!"

"You have all come back?"

"You are early, honey!"

"Welcome back, honey!"

Yep.

Of course, their companions are the over-200-year-old mothers of this village.

The eldest mother too came out clinging towards Derrick.

"Oh my, what web is this? Is this Arachne webbing?"

"It is."

“Oh my, my, give it here. I will make you something good.”

“Thank you.”

Derrick softly brushed her hair and the eldest mother loved the gesture.

At the affectionate scene of the middle-aged couple, I felt jealously and sadness again.

“I also request a shirt for Kim.”

“Ah, of course. Kim doesn’t have a companion.”

‘Kuhuk.’

Suddenly treated as single.

But then.

There is a small child running towards us. A very cute girl, it is Elise.

Elise grabs the ankle of the eldest mother’s pants tightly and shook it.

“What is it Elise?”

Elise pointed to the spider webs.

“This? These will be turned into clothing for Derick and Kim... Oh!”

The eldest mother must have realized something and gave Elise a handful.

“Make it your best. Kim said he wants a shirt.”

“Hehehe.”

Elise smiled bashfully at me, hugged the webbing with both arms, and disappeared.

I am not thinking and just stood there blankly.

Derrick’s mumbling brought me back to my senses.

“Now that I think of it, your ages are similar.”

“What?!”

“Kim, how old are you?”

Asked the eldest mother.

“I am 29.”

Do not misunderstand. In Korean age, I am 30, but really I am 29!

“Yes, similar ages. Elise is 31 this year.”

“Kuk!”

I gasped at Derrick’s words.

‘Uh, I see.’

An elf’s lifespan is 3 times as long as a human. On the outside she looks young but the real age is about 3 times more than the appearance.

“Then... the reason she took my portion of webs is...”

“She is going to make you clothing.”

“Kuk!”

It looks like making a man’s clothing is the role of the companion. But Elise making my clothes means...

“Oh, uh no! That won’t do!”

“What is there that won’t do.”

“I mean, it can’t! I am a human and I already have a girl...!”

“Nothing will be a problem. You are our family.”

“Kuaah! R-really, no!”

To get his words that are ringing like an auditory hallucination in my ear, out of my head, I raced up the Tree of Life like a crazy person.



Looking up at Kim Hyun-ho race up the tree like he was trying to escape from something, Derrick said.

“For us elves, making clothing is an expression of thanks, but he seems to have misunderstood it.”

“Hohoho, he must think a companion must make the clothes.”

Generally, making clothes was a way of showing gratitude.

The reason women made their men’s clothing was simple. In general, the most thankful thing is the companion spending his life with you.

“It is fun, let’s just leave it.”

“Aw, how do you know me so well?”

“We are a couple.”

“Hohoho.”

The cutest and oldest couple in this village were affectionate today too.

Chapter 87

Revival (Part 1)

It had been two months since the 6th exam began.

All the while, there has been one thing that has happened.

Elise crafted me a t-shirt. Despite her young age, it was done with impressive skills. Are all elves like this?

Anyway, I said I couldn't accept it and Elise started crying and ran off somewhere and soon after, an infuriated older sister Ella returned with her.

Only after being yelled at for a long time by Ella did I realize my misunderstanding.

To appease the sulking Elise, I performed Bach's minuet for her.

As if she had never cried, she suddenly stopped and Elise became immersed in my playing.

After the piece was over, I realized that all of the village elves had gathered around me.

Eventually, with only the skills I had from getting to Suzuki violin books volume 3, I had to hold a recital.

Of course, normally, it takes a couple years to even get to this point.

Anyway, the music took the elf village by storm.

"It is really a wonderful melody!"

"We should make an instrument like that too!"

As far as instruments go, they just had a reed flute so the elves were in a mad race to make an instrument like the violin.

And surprisingly, a certain young female elf makes an instrument very similar to the jang.

The instrument is coined the elven harp and prorogated quickly and in no time the music did not stop in the village.

The men especially liked to listen to the music so they say it has become a virtue and a task for women?

‘These elves are scary.’

Teaching them any one thing, their ripple effect is no joke.

I promised myself once again, but I will never teach them about gambling.

On top of it all, the threat of the undead was gone and the days passed by leisurely, and all that time, I used my spirit summons to practice my newly created style of marksmanship.

By forcing the bullet’s rotation to accelerate, it maximized the force and thus increased its penetrating power!

The normal gun’s rifling in a spiral, the bullet that gets shot rides those spirals before getting shot out.

At the moment of the shot, Sylph increases the spin of the bullet, making the bullet an incredible screw.

I tested the power, and surprisingly, the bullet penetrated a rock.

I mean, normally the bullet ricochets off the rock instead.

What incredible penetrating power!

‘At this rate, even if the opponent defense can’t be penetrated by regular bullets, it should work now, right?’

It is a power that far surpasses common sense.

In a short distance of 10 m, I think with a gun like this, it would go through even a

bullet proof jacket.

This is it.

In order to survive in the Arena, with methods like this, I had to evolve my skills.

Not relying on comfortable tools but by combining my main skills synergistically.

After developing a new shooting method, I felt more at ease, and turned my attention once more to the elves' problems.

The undead army. We didn't know when and where they would be coming from.

Currently, a widespread search network was being used for impenetrable security, but if we suddenly had to fight straight on, I don't know how that would go.

'The elves are incredible, but nonetheless, their small numbers are disappointing.'

With Derrick as their representative, veteran warrior elves over the age of 200 numbers only 34.

Younger male elves like Jake, there are 97.

The number of mothers and younger females is about the same. In a time of emergency, they have the power to fight, but we still lack power.

'To keep the entire Brown mountain as their territory and maintain it, the numbers are insufficient.'

I got an idea and quietly approached the eldest mother.

"What would you think of having another elf village on the Brown mountain?"

"Another village?"

"Yes, is that not a possibility?"

"Why would it not be? The Brown mountain is extensive, even with more elves living here, we would be living with ample room."

“Don’t you think that there are other elves out there whose Tree of Life in their areas has deteriorated and therefore they have become targets for humans?”

“I am sure there are. The ones that came to us after being slaves, that is their story as well. Only if the Tree of Life is well would there would be no instance of elves being such easy prey to humans.”

The eldest mother’s face was full of sadness and pity.

I continued.

“Then what do you think of calling those elves here and forming another village?”

“An elf’s village must have a Tree of Life... Ah!”

The eldest mother has realized something.

I knew it too.

In an elf village, in its center must be a Tree of Life. Not only does it give them power from nature but also spiritual support.

But aren’t there two Trees of Life on this Brown mountain?

“With the newly growing Tree of Life from the southwest as the center.”

“Yes, I have heard that that small Tree of Life is growing steadily every day, thanks to you.”

“If another elf village were to exist here, the population would grow by that much as well, if and when the undead attack, we will have that much more of an advantage in fighting.”

“That is a good idea. First, let us ask the ones that came from slavery.”

After that, everything fell into place.

It is because of the 10 former elf slaves, there were 3 elder women who joined the mothers’ meeting.

“The Tree of Life withered away for reasons we could not understand and to avoid the invasion of humans, we had to hide deep within the forest.”

“I am from that same village. I thought maybe the Tree of Life would get better I went out to check on it only to find that humans were hiding there...”

These two mothers are from the same village.

“That is strange. A similar thing happened to my village.”

After hearing it all, I told the eldest mother my theory.

“Most likely, I think the evil black magicians’ plot is to go against all the elves on the continent.”

“The black magicians attacking us?”

I continued to explain.

“Elf slaves are sold for a high price, so they can easily sway a neighboring land for their aid. Using whatever method, when the magicians wither a Tree of Life, that land’s army swoops in and takes the elves, that is their pattern.”

“How awful! They have continued such evil, now it is our turn to act!”

“Yes, but of course that is only my theory, we can’t be sure.”

The eldest mother was pissed.

“I am sure that they are targeting the Trees of Life. Based on that alone, they are our sworn enemies.”

“I agree.”

“Thanks to you we were able to preserve our Tree of Life. It is a great relief.”

The eldest mother looked at me with a warm gaze.

“I will follow your view. As an elf myself, how could I turn a blind eye to such troubles that have affected my brethren? We will bring them to the Brown mountain.”

“I heard there are other trees on the Brown mountain with the potential to be turned into Trees of Life, I wonder if I could nurture those as well.”

“With your powers, I have no doubt you could! Well.....”

“One village to each Tree of Life, if there are lots of villages made on Brown mountain, wouldn’t Brown mountain become an impenetrable elf territory?”

“Incredible! If everyone gathered together, no one could defeat us.”

At the end of their discussion, the mothers agreed to follow my thinking.

First, they decided to get the elves from the village that two of the three slave mothers came from.

“I shall take care of that.”

Said Derrick.

It is a task that required leaving Brown mountain. As much of a dangerous task it is in that the elves have to step foot and cut across human lands, there is no choice but for best warrior, Derrick, to put his foot forward.

Derrick picked 2 more veteran warriors, and then he picked another three younger male elves to have them experience the outside world.

I plead to Derrick.

“As much as possible, it would be good to stay within Odin’s lands.”

“I will accept his help. We have made a treaty, I am sure he will accommodate us.”

I have to give a flame to the Tree of Life so I could not go with them.

The two mothers who were slaves went with them as guides and thus, Derrick’s group departed.



“You are really going to leave this Tree of Life to us?”

The faces of the older female elves were deeply touched.

In a little less than 2 months-time, Derrick returned, his task complete.

The elves that had lost their village and had to live in hiding deep in the forest were brought safely here.

On the way, they met elf hunters three times, but everyone says Derrick took care of them.

And so, the not quite 100 elves that had just arrived on the Brown mountain were given the small Tree of Life as their new home.

“The tree is far from fully grown so it is not quite ready to be the center of a village.”

Said the eldest mother.

The mothers from the new village waved their hands.

“No, it is not so! As much as it has yet to grow, its potential is infinite. Not only that, despite its small size, it is already a full-fledged Tree of Life.”

“Thank you sincerely for giving us a new home.”

Like that, a new elf village was formed.

In order to differentiate between the two villages, this one is called the “Pine tree village.” Our village is called “Zelkova Tree Village.”

Thanks to the creation of pine tree village, the burden scouting the area became a lot lighter.

Thanks to the Tree of Life, the warriors in the pine tree village were, little by little, recuperating and they were enthusiastic about guarding their new home.

‘Good, because of this, our power has grown a lot.’

My impulsive idea has yielded great results.

‘What if we could make more villages this way?’

If we grew another tree and made another village?

Then, we can easily drive the undead-group-controlling-black magicians’ plot to the ground.

And I would clear the mission without raising a hand!

‘This is why people should use their heads.’

Without personally fighting and shedding blood, I was able to be an important role in clearing this mission!

“Let’s raise another one!”

I ran to the mothers and insisted.

The mothers were already aware of my grand plans and gave me a hearty welcome.

“For now, we will use your power to focus on creating a new Tree of Life.”

Said the eldest mother.

“On the northwest side, there is a maple tree that has the potential to be a Tree of Life. When taking into consideration the location, I think that one would be suitable.”

“Then I guess the next village will be the Maple Tree Village.”

“Hohoho, I guess so.”

Name: Maple Tree Village Project

I made two flames of life and gave it to the elves scouting the northwest side.

I spent my days training on top of the giant Tree of Life in the Zelkova Village.

I think I will focus on raising my spirit summons and athleticism skills.

If I use my head right, I can sit in place and clear this mission.

It was when it had been about a fortnight after starting the maple tree village project.

With spirit summons and violin practice, it wasn't the athleticism skill but an odd skill that increased.

-Flame of life (synthesis skill): blow in a flame of life and give life. 2 uses per day.

*Intermediate level 2: effective for treating: recovery, anti-aging, illness, and curses.

'Huh?'

Now that I think of it, I guess it isn't odd at all.

I diligently made 2 every day, it would have been weird for it to not increase.

'I wonder if the skill has a higher effect when using it, the more the skill level increases?'

In an RPG game, the more damage an attack does to a monster, the more xp you get.

I felt I have realized a new paradigm to skills training.

Chapter 88

Revival (Part 2)

Having raised the flame of life to intermediate level 2 was great news.

After that, the maple tree village project sped up.

Every day, I fed it two flames of life, and it grew up like a bamboo shoot, up and up.

The effects of an intermediate level 2 flame going in every day, the life force spilling from it was clear.

12 months...

The exam was to protect the Brown Mountain elves, and so far, just 4 months have passed by.

In that time, I had gained a lot of results.

First, we scouted the bottom of the cliff and managed to discover the dark magician's plans and obliterated the remaining zombies.

Also, we gathered elves that had nowhere to go and created the pine tree village.

This small village, with a small population of 100 elves, treated this pine tree growing as a Tree of Life as if it was as precious as their own lives.

Not only that, they had joined together with the Zelkova tree villages' veteran warriors and in case of the undead army's infiltration, they had created a strong line of defense.

They were determined not to lose their newly found home.

With the Tree of Life that was growing well, the pine tree village's warriors, who had lost their strength, found that it was slowly returning.

'If the maple tree wakes itself as a Tree of Life, another village could be created!'

I can clear this exam, sitting in the same spot.

Now there was just one thing I wished for.

‘I want for there to not be a fight until the maple village is created.’

The dark magician has nearly exhausted his zombie hordes at the cliff, and I hypothesized that the magician will need some time to replenish his undead army.

The exam’s duration was 12 months.

Probably, the real war would start in the second half. They wouldn’t have given a mission to fight like a hound dog for 12 months.

‘Odin said he had an exam where he was preparing for war for a whole year.’

I figured that this exam would be graded on how well I prepared.

Of course, this was all my speculation and I had no idea what was actually going to happen.

After another month has passed, so a total of 5 months, I heard some great news.

“The maple tree has started growing into a Tree of Life.”

“Already?”

At my surprise, Derrick made a hardly seen joyous expression.

“Yes. It is gobbling up your flames and growing well.”

“Um, how is it as being the center of a village? Isn’t it still too lacking?”

“It is lacking but for the elves that have already lost their Tree of Life, that isn’t something to split hairs over. A tree that has the potential to become a Tree of Life isn’t hard to find but it is very difficult to wake up that potential and help it to grow properly.”

Hmm, and on top of that, this Brown Mountain already has two elf villages and it is a safe area where they could protect each other.

A new village, and the maple tree's growth will bring elves here.

"Should we grow another village now then?"

"Let's."

We delivered this news to the mothers at Zelkova village.

"In that case, like the pine tree village, we should find elves that have lost their homes."

Said the eldest mother happily.

Gathering the 8 elves that previously lived as slaves, they were asked where their native homes were and where their elves were hiding and living.

"In the hiding place I was in, there were 34 elves from my village. But that is from 7 years ago, I wonder how much that number must have shrunk by now....."

Said the mother who used to be a slave. She was now new member of the mothers.

"The place where our village was hiding has already been attacked by humans."

Said one of the two adult elves.

Then another spoke.

"I was attacked during a scouting mission. Our hiding place has either not been found yet or if they managed to escaped to a new safe place, there will be 41 in that forest."

The remaining 5 young elves all had their homes already raided and their friends and families all have been enslaved by humans.

'Damn.'

The more I heard their stories about the barbaric nature of humans became the stronger my rage and hatred became.

'Greedy bastards. Would it hurt them to just live peacefully amongst each other?'

Even on Earth, there was the barbaric history of enslaving other races, making

colonies from them.

I thought maybe humans are animals that can't help themselves.

"Bring all of them from the two spots."

Decided the eldest mother.

As if it was a given, the other mothers nodded their heads in agreement.

There was no talk of choosing one over the other. Because they could not turn their head towards only one.

Derrick took charge of one and the other was led by the veteran warrior Cob.

In order to set up a new village, the two teams embarked.

'Good luck!'

While we awaited their safe return, I made the flames of life and trained my skills like I always did.

Because the maple tree had started growing as a Tree of Life, I started giving it one flame and gave the other flame to the pine tree village.

The pine tree village was extremely thankful.

After a fortnight has passed, a letter arrived from Odin.

The person who said he came from the Count of Wolfenbrook left as soon as they delivered the letter.

[You were carrying out some fun plans. I too am doing my best to assist in saving the elves and moving them to Brown mountain. If it goes according to your plan, I don't think we will have to worry about the undead attack.

I am currently in the midst of a war with Count Bastian. The bastards known as the Silver Clan lycanthropes... I get the sense that they have joined the humans and are assisting him.

But they aren't strong enough to be considered as an enemy for me. They fear me and are avoiding a full-scale war, but I think we will be able to settle this within 3 months.

I will help as soon as this war is over. Since we are allies.

-Odin]

It is all thanks to treating his daughter Bella. Odin is sincerely aiding me with everything he has.

Anyway, hearing that Odin was winning the war took a weight off my shoulders.

'However, those Silver clan guys, getting full of it day by day.'

I recalled Leon Silver.

Juno, Hye-su, Kang Cheon-sung, the day I lost them, Leon silver could not have been scarier.

Lycanthropes, unbelievably intelligent and charismatic.

But now that I look at it, he is not a scary figure as he was then.

He was not intelligent.

Absorbing human culture and methods and strengthening his clan left a lasting impression on me, but he is a frog stuck in a well.

'It is the arrogance of the ignorant.'

Basically, thinking that he himself was the strongest thing is Leon Silver's greatest weakness.

Probably, in a short while, he will taste the bitterness of defeat.

'If the opportunity occurs, I would like to finish him with my own hand.'

I have now grown so much I am unrecognizable compared to back then. Even if I were to fight the silver clan by myself, I had some level of confidence.

My comrades' revenge, I have to do it myself for me to release my resentment and sorrow.

'This exam, after dealing with the undead's invasion, if I get some time, I will go look for them.'

Of course, I am not reckless so I won't go trekking into the world alone.*

(TN: The author uses an idiom – hyul hyul dan shin meaning to be all alone in the world)

It would be plenty if I take one or two warriors like Jake.



7 months since the start of the exam.

Derrick and Bob's teams have returned.

Derrick's team brought back 31 elf migrants, and Cob's team brought back 26 surviving elf migrants.

Due to their small numbers, we suggested that the two groups combine and live together in the maple tree village, and they happily agreed.

"It really is a Tree of Life!"

"It is small but growing well!"

"I can sense a strong force of life. Huk, how beautiful this is.....!"

The elves were moved by the maple tree that had recently awoken as a Tree of Life and was growing at a rapid pace.

It was a scene that showed just how precious the Tree of Life was to the elves.

'How dare they try take something so precious.'

The ones called the dark magicians, once again I found them to be disgusting creatures.

Humans, how much hurt must they cause before they are satisfied.

‘I will quash them all.’

Anyway, that is how 57 elves became the maple tree village in the Northwest.

The Zelkova tree village.

The pine tree village.

And the maple tree village.

The original owners of the Brown mountain, the Zelkova village, was located on the inside of the ridge with the pine and maple tree village’s surrounding it.

It can be seen that the pine tree village and the maple tree village have become defense blocks against the undead invasion.

But the two villages don’t feel bad about it at all.

They made their decision beforehand after hearing that the undead might attack and moreover, they were ecstatic at having been given a Tree of Life.

Even with that, there were new suggestions made by the maple tree village.

“We have looked around and found there are two more trees with the potential to be Trees of Life.”

“How would it be if we grew those as Trees of Life and brought more of our kind who are in circumstances like we were?”

It was a suggestion made by some of the representatives, mothers from the maple tree village, who came to us.

The eldest mother of the Zelkova village then asked.

“Have you heard of any unfortunate brethren of ours?”

“Yes, I have only heard through hearsay so we will have to look.”

With this as their topic, the Zelkova village mothers began to discuss.

Should I call it a discussion...

It was scary chatter.

At the end of the chatter, the eldest mother announced the decision.

“We will ask for aid from our ally, the count of Wolfenbrooke.”

Her decision was as follows.

She will send elves to the count of Wolfenbrooke and while they help in Odin’s war they will also would have the task of finding hidden elves.

“As they bring more of us, if their numbers are small, we will join them into the maple tree village. And Kim.”

“Yes, mother.”

“You were able to make two flames of life, right? Continue giving one to the maple tree village, and the other, let’s use to start growing the other Tree of Life.”

“I understand.”

First, we have to ask Odin if he will comply with our request.

Veteran warrior Cob went to the count of Wolfenbrooke. He rode Sylph and flew quickly to Odin who heard his request, and returned.

“He said he will work to make it happen.”

At Cob’s news, the eldest mother carried out her plan immediately.

It was a dangerous mission that would require fighting alongside Odin against Count Bastian, so with Cob, another 5 veteran warriors were sent.

Derrick stayed on Brown Mountain, not knowing when the fight with the undead will happen.

Like that, within 10 days of Cob and his team going to Count Wolfenbrooke, we started seeing results.

“Shameless Bastian and his men had 9 of our people as slaves.”

Impressively, Cob’s team infiltrated Count Bastian’s palatial residence.

There, they assassinated five of Bastian’s family members, and rescued 9 elves that were enslaved there, accomplishing some amazing military merits.

Because of it, Bastian and his forces were thrown into massive disarray which made Odin very happy.

‘Really amazing. Veteran warriors!’

Thus the 9 rescued elves were split between the pine tree village and the maple tree village.

We were going to send everyone to the maple tree village but there were two of them that were originally from the same village as the pine tree village elves.

The pine village reunited with 2 lost family members and became a sea of tears.

Like this, the Brown mountain elves used their crisis as an opportunity for revival.

Chapter 89

Invasion (Part 1)

After 8 months had passed, a suspicious trend was detected.

“We have detected traces of all kinds of monsters.”

The news was delivered by warriors from the Pine Tree Village.

Derrick returned to the village.

The veteran warriors were on break so they joined the mothers in a meeting.

I was atop the Tree of Life and practicing my violin. I too was called to this meeting.

The idea of starting a new village came from me, and among the elves I became an important adviser.

“Like you said, they said that the evidence of the Arachne is greatest. Moreover, there is no way that such giant monsters would move in groups that size, so we can safely assume they are undead and are being manipulated.”

Said Derrick.

“The fact that they have shown themselves must mean that it is almost time to fight. Have you told the news to the Maple Tree Village?”

“Of course.”

At the eldest mother’s question, the warrior from the Pine Tree Village nodded his head.

We kept going with the meeting when suddenly Derrick stared at me.

“What do you think?”

I got the sense that Derrick really valued my opinions.

I first organized all the thoughts in my head.

Everything is a hint.

The truths I have learned after becoming an examinee, I always remembered and I took everything that happens around me as a warning.

The same went for this situation.

The fact that the bastards have shown themselves, I had a feeling this was something.

And the thoughts that kept coming at the ends of more thoughts.....

“Kim?”

At Derrick’s question, I said.

“The bastards are playing tricks.”

“Tricks?”

“Does something come to mind?”

Everyone’s attention was focused on me.

I said.

“I find it suspicious that they showed themselves on purpose. Why not just attack and just show us a glimpse?”

“When you say it that...”

“That is really weird.”

“It is them saying they are bent on attacking.”

Said Derrick.

“In that case, this time too, like the zombie horde, they will focus our attention on this and be up to something somewhere else.”

“Yes, they have probably sensed the increase in the elf population on the Brown Mountain. Instead of a head on attack, they are probably thinking of a different strategy.”

“What is that?”

“I have carefully theorized something.”

“Speak your mind.”

Said the eldest mother.

I carefully said what I was thinking.

“Think of when the entire continent of elves lost their trees and were attacked by humans.”

“The more I think about it, the angrier it makes me. When I think of the Trees of Life hurt by the acts of the dark magicians...!”

“How could they!”

The mothers expressed their anger.

I continued speaking.

“The human armies trapped elves as slaves. Living elves. Then what happened to the elves that died fighting?”

“...!”

“Dead... dead elves.....!”

“No!”

Everyone’s faces were shocked.

“If those bastards were willing to turn their own kind, the humans, into zombies, what would they have thought when they saw the elves? If those elves befell a tragedy by the hands of the dark magicians...”

“They would have turned them into undead...”

“Evil bastards!”

“How could they.....!”

Everyone was furious.

Some mothers were about to weep.

I was angry too but these elves, considering they were the same race, how would they feel?

“Showing us a hint of the giant monsters to us is to move our attention towards that. When they are actually going to use our brethren, who have become undead, to attack us covertly using their speed and agility.”

At Derrick's word's, I nodded my head.

“I think so. Right now, immediately, deliver the news and warn the villages and we have to make a sign that only we can identify. Like wrapping a band around our arms for example.”

“That sounds good. Everyone can wear a cloth band on their right arm. Women, children, everyone.”

The eldest mother's decision was final.

Derrick got up from his seat.

“I will go let the Maple Tree Village know.”

“I will let our Pine Tree Village know.”

The Pine Tree Village messenger got up from his seat.

The warning system for the Brown Mountain's three villages was now put in place.

Everyone wrapped a cloth band on their right arm, and I did it too.

A week later, my premonitions were shown to be correct.

That day, Derrick was out scouting at night when he discovered a group of five elves, and after verifying they had no bands, he immediately stabbed them all.

Derrick summoned Kasa and rained down flames and signaled the warning to everyone.

With that signal as the start, all the warriors that had been sleeping went out altogether.

A total of 97 undead elves were annihilated that day.

As if that was not enough, all the villagers were gathered in one place, and a tally was taken to thoroughly check if the undead were hidden amongst us.

A giant battle in the middle of the night.

Our damage was the devil.

We knew ahead and were prepared, and thus it was a perfect victory.

I too was involved in the plan but I didn't fight a single time.

The reason was because the other elf warriors moved so fast.

But we could not enjoy the joys of victory.

"Uh hu hu huk!"

"Mark! It's our village's Mark!"

"Sarah! How did...!"

"Evil bastards!"

Amongst the undead elves, a considerable amount were family members from the Pine Tree Village and Maple Tree Village.

And a sight I could hardly watch occurred.

The familiar faces were cremated and taken care of by the Pine Tree Village and Maple Tree Village, and the rest were cremated and their ashes spread at a location central to the three villages.

“Let us all combine our strengths and overcome this so that a thing like this never happens to us again.”

The eldest mother gave a word of encouragement where all the elves from the three villages were gathered.

And when the funeral was over, the elves approached me.

“Kim!”

“You were impressive.”

“If it weren’t for you, we would have been in trouble.”

“You are a gift to us.”

“Nature is fair. In recompense for the evil humans in the world, you have been gifted to us.”

“You are a genius!”

I was swept up in plenty of compliments.

My wisdom was acknowledged and it made me happy but at the same time, regretful.

‘Everyone says I am this great and smart, but why did I keep failing the civil exam!’

‘You hadn’t starved yet and come to your senses.’

The baby angel’s words of truth lingered in my ear.



“How did you fail?!”

Puk!

A man let out his rage as he struck a tree with his cane.

A middle aged man, so thin one almost wouldn't think he could be alive, was dressed in a brownish dirty robe and had a pale complexion.

With the raging skinny middle aged man in front, there were two young men in robes, with their heads hung down in shame, who don't know what to do

“That is.....”

“We haven't found the culprit...”

“Useless idiots!”

The middle-aged man's cane flew out towards the young men.

Puuk! Puk!

“Kuk!”

“Uk!”

Each man was hit once on the head causing blood to flow down their faces.

“The time poured into this effort has already neared 3 years! 3 years! What other places do in 1 or 2 years, is taking 3!”

The middle aged man spoke as if reciting history.

“Why did the tree that was cursed to wither doing better than it was before, and why have the Brown Mountain elves' numbers nearly doubled in such a short time?!”

“Our apologies, sir.”

“I am sorry!”

The men were intimidated and started off with apologies.

Their pathetic state only seemed to make the middle-aged man even angrier.

“Think, think! How are those stupid elves suddenly aware of all our plans?!”

The elves they were used dealing with weren’t the kind that were this agile and quick with their decisions.

Their attentions were lacking as long as their lives were long and slow.

That is why the three of them decided to go after the most powerful elves, which lived on Brown Mountain, without a problem.

In the beginning, it went just as according to plan.

A curse was put on the Tree of Life, then they directed the elf warrior’s focus elsewhere.

While doing so, using a plentiful amount of human corpses, they turned them into zombies and continuously attacked and weakened the elves.

While attacking with zombies, they created zombies from big monster corpses and were going to attack with them.

Having lost the Tree of Life, the elves would be weak and unable to stop that attack.

But now, somehow, the Tree of Life overcame the curse and was stronger. On top of that, another Tree of Life had been created.

They had lost all the zombies from the cliff.

The middle aged man reported to the higher ups that the failure of the zombie attack was a part of the plan.

His anxiety was growing so he decided to use all of the precious elf undead he had been saving for a later attack.

‘But how is this possible? Why did it fail?!’

In a single day, the undead elves were annihilated.

There was not a single elf with a dark spell on it.

In a single night.

As if they had been waiting for it, the elves overcame it at with no problems.

‘There is no way those old elf bitches are this smart!’

The older women elves that are called the mothers have a discerning eye regarding the future but were weak in urgent situations that are constantly in flux.

Because of that they were able to attack the elves in these matriarchal societies.

But this time around, the opponent was more sharp and agile than they were.

There is no way it is the work of an elf.

‘That’s right, the Wolfenbrooke, Baron Odin, has formed an alliance with the elves.’

The elves that have lost their villages are making a mass move and the count of Wolfenbrooke helped them.

In return, the strong elves are going to help the count of Wolfenbrooke fight Baron Bastian.

The Brown Mountain elves have allied with a human, which is very unlike elves. In that case.....

‘It is a human.’

A very smart human that has the confidence (of the elves) and was able to move them to action.

“M-master.”

“What should we report to the superior authority?”

Carefully asked the two useless idiots.

The middle-aged man found himself pathetic for having two guys like these as his disciples.

“We have to tell them honestly that we failed and come up with a new plan!”

“Hik?!”

“But, then, we.....!”

The two disciples’ faces were overcome with fear.

“But just a failure won’t do.”

The master’s words continued.

“There has to be at least one outcome so that we are forgiven for it!”

“What outcome are you speaking of.....?”

“A human, you fools!”

The master flung around his cane once again and beat his disciples and yelled.

“The human advising the elves, we have to at least eliminate that one!”

“There is such a human?”

“Ah... that is why the elves have become so smart.....”

It seemed that the pathetic disciples weren’t even able to think that far.

The master screamed.

“He is a character that is big hindrance to our plans going forward! But thankfully we have taken care of him! That is the only way I can save face! We have to put everything we’ve got into this and at least get rid of that guy!”

“Even the elf undead have failed, how will we assassinate him?”

“He is definitely getting the elves’ protection.....”

“You stupid idiots! Of course impossible assassinating him is impossible!”

“Well, then?”

The master spoke.

“Put in all the monsters! It is a full scale war. We have to take advantage of the chaos of war if we are to have a chance at eliminating him.”

Chapter 90

Invasion (Part 2)

The full-scale offensive began.

The Arachne were a given and all kinds of other giant monsters made an appearance.

‘The bastards were bursting out from all directions.’

That was the only way to see it.

With all their plans having failed, they were just gambling on attacking with everything they’ve got.

‘Or is there another plan in play?’

When I thought about it, there was no way these guys were that simple.

Think.

They are the ones who have mastered the dark magic that had been banned by the entire continent.

How long they have stayed hidden? In all that time, how careful must they have become?

Men like that are just attacking willy-nilly?

I got the feeling that they might be using this time to make a play for something else.

‘The Tree of Life?’

The only thing to immediately pop into my mind was that.

But that is not something I had specifically warned the elves about.

Already, there are two to three veteran warriors guarding the Tree of Life in each village.

The Tree of Life is as important as their own lives, of course they took action to protect all of the trees.

“I will fight too.”

“Can’t you just stay in the village?”

The eldest mother implored.

“My dearest Derrick compliments that your skills have greatly improved, but to us you are a very precious being.”

“I am a man too. Everyone is fighting, I cannot just stay and hide in the village.”

“But.....”

“Even without fighting, Kim, you have already played a huge role.”

“Yes, this is our fight so leave it to our warriors?”

“It’ll be a big problem if you fight and die.”

The mothers, one by one, worried about me and tried to stop me.

I spoke.

“Do not fret. I too value my life above all else. If I get even the slightest whiff of something bad, I will retreat.”

The eldest mother could no longer beg me not to go and allowed it.

“Then please be careful.”

“Yes.”

I headed to where the battle was the fiercest.

The bastards were attacking from the northwest, west, and southwest directions.

The Maple Tree Village in the northwest, the Pine Tree Village in the southwest, and in the west, our Zelkova Tree Village was taking care of them.

Of course, in the Maple Tree Village where their fighting power wasn't as strong, warriors from the Zelkova Tree Village went to their aid.

I went to the west where Derrick was fighting.

The warriors of the Zelkova Tree Village were very distinguished.

Not only the veterans but the young warriors as well, their fighting was amazing.

Pat!

In an instant, one went up a tree and shot an arrow, then hung from a branch upside down with his two feet and shot another.

Chwak! Chwak!

“Keek!”

“Keleek!”

The Arachne were hit with arrows and stumbled.

One Arachne shot out a web, but the young male elf quickly twisted his body midair and escaped.

‘Woah, the effects of playing tag!’

Indeed.

Dodging quickly in order to not get caught atop the Tree of Life, those skills from those games of tag were making their appearance here.

The game of tag training has had a sure impact!

‘I’ll see the results of my training too!’

My improved power skills in shooting thanks to Sylph and Kasa!

First, I summoned my Mosin-Nagant.

“Sylph, Kasa, remember?”

-Meow!

-Mung mung!

Sylph and Kasa nodded their heads.

Sylph held the Mosin-Nagant and pulled the action lever then assumes shooting position. Next to her, Kasa was standing patiently.

If I were to take a picture, I think Cha Ji-hye would have fainted from the cuteness of this scene.

Using the power of the two spirits, the strong Mosin-Nagant's began shooting.

Tang-

“Keek!”

An Arachne had its eye penetrated and collapsed right where it stood.

Tang!

“Kuek!”

Another shot landed on the neck of a giant monster with green skin. The green monster spewed out blood from its neck.

I recalled the name of that monster from pictures I've seen in books, the troll.

I was told a bullet wouldn't penetrate the skin of a troll but the Mosin-Nagant shot it and now it was bleeding.

'I've gotten stronger!'

I felt a pang of gladness.

The troll did not bother to avoid the bullet and it stumbled.

Tang-

“Kuek!”

Sylph shot again and it landed on the neck again. At Sylph’s ruthless blows, the troll fell to the ground.

I had become strong enough to collapse a troll in an instant.

Surpassing the limits of a gun, I had attained a stronger attack using spirits.

If I continued to progress this way, I think it would work for exams going forward.

While the spirits attack one by one with the Mosin-Nagant, I took out my double guns and approached the monsters.

“Sheek-.”

“Sheeek-.”

“Sheek-.”

The monsters making this weird rattlesnake noises were lizardmen.

With a height similar to a full-grown man, their bodies were entirely covered in scales.

They had arms and legs and walked upright like humans but it was a monster closer to reptiles than it was to an alien.

Their weapons are sharp nails.

I thought I wouldn’t be able to do much damage because their scales are hard, but thankfully their abdominal area is oddly soft and the guns worked on them.

I concentrated on their abdomens and shot my guns.

Taaaang-

“Sheek!”

“Shweek!”

Two lizardmen fell.

The lizardmen behind them had no fear and continued to move forward. They saw how their comrade in front of them died, but because they are undead, they don't seem to have the ability to learn from their comrade's deaths.

I continued to aim at the abdomens and dropped them.

But there is an advantage to the undead.

The bastards that fell from being shot in the abdomen started to twitch and get back up again.

‘This is annoying.’

At this rate, this is just a waste of bullets.

“Divine Protection of the Wind!”

I jumped into the air.

With the gust of wind, my body was thrust high into the air.

I landed atop a tree and I immediately pulled out the magnum bullets and placed them into an empty chamber.

‘I will just leave the killing to the spirits’ shooting and I’ll just run and avoid them.’

Sylph and Kasa were definitely making a difference with their one shot one kill.

When the bullets ran out, Sylph quickly reloaded from the box of 7.62 mm bullets at her side.

The fight continued like this when.

-It is you.

Suddenly, a voice rang through.

How should I put it?

It was not a voice that permeated through the air by a voice.

Something that cannot be heard through the senses?

That is how strange it is.

“Who are you?”

I shouted.

-Who do you think?

Suddenly, before my eyes, a black smoke grew tall.

The black smoke gave way to a shape. A worn-out robe worn by a thin middle-aged man. Perhaps like the appearance of a monk from the middle ages?

“Dark magician?”

-Ha, more accurately, I am a necromancer. There are divisions of black magic too.

It looked like the thin middle-aged man was smiling.

-You are the one lending your wisdom to the elves. Are you a subordinate of count of Wolfenbrooke?

“A friend.”

-Haha, is that so? You do not deny you lend your wisdom to the elves though.

“You already know anyway.”

-You are indeed smart. It would be a waste. If you were to be my disciple in black magic, I think you would do very well.

“No need for that. I’m terrible at studying.”

Although it may be different if I had to study in order to not starve, I guess.

-Anyhow, I have to at least kill you. I have to at least accomplish that.

“You have to accomplish that? I guess you have an organization.”

-..... I have made a mistake. My lips were careless. Well, no matter.

The middle-aged man’s eyes became dark.

-Since I’m going to kill you anyway.

In an instant, the middle-aged man disappeared into a black smoke.

The black smoke poured onto me.

“What?!”

It alarmed me and I immediately jumped towards the sky. Thank goodness I still had some time on the Divine Protection of the Wind left.

But the fog chased after me.

The black fog, once again, turned into the shape of the middle-aged man. With the cane he is holding, he started waving it towards me.

Boong!

“Kuk!”

I barely twisted my body and avoided it.

-Hmph.

The middle-aged man clicked his tongue in disappointment.

I got an uneasy feeling and escaped the area with all my might and it seemed my feelings were correct.

Seeing how disappointed he was about the attack with his cane, I don't think it was a simple attack.

'Does that cane place a curse?'

He is a dark magician, it is well within his means.

I spun in a circle in the air and shot my double guns towards the middle-aged man.

Tang-

The two Neilson H2's shot. The bullets hit and passed through the middle-aged man.

Just like that, they literally passed through him.

All that happened was that the part that was hit dispersed the black smoke.

The dispersed fog reassembled to its previous form.

'Does force not work on him?'

Is he just an apparition?

'No.'

When he moved to hit me with his cane, his movements were too real to be just an illusion.

-You use a fun weapon.

The middle-aged man laughed and headed for me again. He came at me like a phantom and it gave me a creepy feeling.

'Hold on, smoke?'

Let's try this out. Before all the time for the Divine Protection of the Wind runs out.

The moment he came near me, I did a somersault as I spun and kicked.

Paat!

A kick that made a semicircle, like a martial arts move.

And from my foot, a burst of air flew towards the middle-aged man.

-Kuk!

The middle-aged man got pushed far back. The power of the attack was not that strong but his whole body was black smoke and nearly split in half.

Did the wind really work?

Because he is smoke?

I put away my double guns and got in a boxing stance.

The boxing I thought I would never be able to use, began.

I continuously jabbed at the middle-aged man.

The strong gusts made the middle-aged man's head fly up and down.

Pupupung- puung!

-Kuk! You bastard!

Every time I hit him, the middle-aged man's body that had become black smoke dispersed a little bit. The middle-aged man appeared distressed.

-What in the world is this?

"What?"

-How is energy like this being put forth. You, are you a spirit summoner?

"So what?"

-Damn. Of course.

But then, a young elf nearby ran towards us.

“Kim, you okay?!”

It's Jake.

The middle-aged man saw him and clicked his tongue.

-This won't do. I thought I could personally intervene and take care of at least you but..... You really complicate things quite a bit.

“Does me being a spirit summoner complicate things?”

Then that means it wasn't the wind, but because the Divine Protection of the Wind is a derivative of spirit summons that the attack damaged him.

-Don't be happy like you've found out something. It is easily found common knowledge that black magic and spirit summons are incompatible.

“Regardless, I guess your standing in your organization has become quite complicated? Since you keep failing. So... you'll be replaced or punished?”

-Hahaha, smartass. Fine, enjoy your victory for today.

“That's the plan.”

-But remember. Now I will remember you. I will come for you.

“You want me to remember? Shouldn't you give me a name then?”

The middle-aged man laughed.

-It is John Omento. Knowing my name won't help you know anything so best not get your hopes up.

“Farewell then, John Omento. I hope you meet your end with some light punishment.”

-Hmph.

Then, the black magician, nay, the necromancer by the name of John Omento, became black smoke and dispersed into the surrounding air.

“Are you okay?”

Asked Jake.

I nodded my head.

“Yeah. I think that guy just now is the dark magician orchestrating this whole thing.”

“Really? Damn it, we should have killed him, we let him get away!”

“I don’t think he is enemy easily killed.”

Force doesn’t work on him, and he becomes black smoke and is able to move freely in the air. He can also disappear and reappear anywhere it seems.

But John Omento doesn’t seem to be good at direct combat.

Is it because he is a magician?

Instead of directly fighting, he is more accustomed to being a special class that creates undead and orchestrates them.

I tapped Jake on the shoulder.

“Come, let’s go. Let’s finish this fight.”

Chapter 91

The End (Part 1)

The fight was finally finished.

It was a grand victory for us.

From all corners of the Brown Mountain, the elves had achieved an overwhelming victory.

We had an ironclad defense and the head on attack by the undead army was no match for us.

“We won!”

“Did you see!”

“Never invade again!”

The warriors’ shouts rang throughout the battlefield.

Upon our triumphant return to the Zelkova Tree Village, the women and children welcomed us.

From here and there, the delightful sound of the elven harp could be heard.

“Honey!”

“Honey, you worked so hard!”

The women hugged their husbands that safely returned and rejoiced. The young men who haven’t yet married also all had lovers to greet them.

‘It’s just me that’s alone.’

I said and I felt lonely when suddenly a young girl ran towards me.....

“Elise?”

“Hehehe.”

Elise put a crown made of flowers on my head.

“Thanks.”

I stroked her hair which made Elise so happy.

But Elise, don't fall for me. This oppa doesn't like that style.*

(TN: He ain't into lolis.)

That day was a celebration.

Victory.

Defeating the elves' enemy and protecting their home, such a joyous occasion.

The celebration went on all night, crazily. The laughter didn't end.

As the night grew deeper, I got tired and wanted to rest but the elves wouldn't let me leave. They called me the hero of this war and having them lift me up did feel good.

‘Now with this, I'm sure the exam is cleared and over with.’

The time period left was only 4 months.

I don't think that in that time frame, the dark magicians will throw another attack of this scale.

‘But I cannot be careless.’

Like I have done so far, we have to keep bringing elves to the Brown Mountain and making villages and reviving Trees of Life

So that no one lays on hand on the elves ever again.



We received word that Odin's war was in the final stages.

Baron Bastian was unable to defeat the count of Wolfenbrooke and was repeatedly defeated.

It seemed the effect of Cob and the five veteran elf warriors was immense as well. In the letter, Odin praised their contributions as the major factor.

As the war neared its end, Cob's teams' real mission sped underway.

Searching for elves that had lost their Tree of Life and were deep in hiding to avoid humans and bringing them back to the Brown Mountain.

The steady influx of these elves got placed into the population-deficient Maple Tree Village and Pine Tree Village.

But even with those two villages, as the population increased, the imminent need that another Tree of Life had to be grown became apparent.

So I decided to give two flames of life to another tree.

This time is a Thuja tree in the north.

'This one is the Thuja village.'

But like this, with the five or so elves that came at a time, it was not enough to sustain a new village.

At the very least, there needed to be about 30 refugee elves to found a solid village and after that as more elves entered, the population of the village would grow.

'Well, there is still time, it will work out.'

For now, I concentrated on growing the Thuja tree.

An intermediate level 2 power makes two flames of life and the Thuja tree grows well.

But then, while the Thuja tree hadn't grown into becoming a Tree of Life yet, Cob's

team brought a large population of refugee elves.

“We heard there is a safe place for us to call home here.”

The one that looked to be the leader of this group, an older female elf, came to us and asked.

It was a large group of refugees, a total of 42 elves.

The eldest mother greeted them.

“Welcome. We will tell you where you will live.”

We guided them to the northern territory where the Thuja tree is.

Having seen the Thuja tree, the elves rejoiced and at the same time looked disappointed.

“It is a tree with the potential of a Tree of Life.”

“It looks like it is growing well.”

“But there is no way to know for sure if it will grow into one for sure...”

They had heard there was a Tree of Life where they could form a new village of their own and voyaged to the Brown Mountain for it.

But seeing as there was a Thuja tree that hadn't yet turned into a Tree of Life, their disappointment was understandable.

“But what a relief it is that we have a safe place to live.”

“Yes. Maybe it is because this mountain has a lot of trees of life that the energy of nature is strong.”

“We will live here and care for this Thuja tree.”

The mothers of the refugees spoke to each other and made a decision.

Then, the eldest mother spoke to them.

“Do not misunderstand, please. This Thuja tree, in about a month’s time, it can be a Tree of Life.”

“What?”

“Is that true?”

“How is that possible?”

The refugee mothers were all suspicious.

The eldest mother looked at me.

“Kim, show them.”

“Yes.”

In front of everyone, I created two flames of life.

The refugees saw the flames of life and were extremely surprised.

“How full of life energy!”

“If it consumes that energy, the Thuja tree will grow up fast for sure.”

“It will gain the strength to become a Tree of Life.”

Now, everyone’s faces were earnestly wanting me to use these flames for the Thuja tree.

I blew the two flames of life into the Thuja tree.

“Ahhh!”

“It is overflowing with energy!”

“It is full of the strength of life!”

“I can sense it bubbling up to grow.”

“It is an incredible power of nature!”

The refugees were in a frenzy.

I was not sure, but in the elves’ eyes, the effect of the flame of life must be visible to them. Must be because they are elves.

I spoke.

“If I blow two flames of life into it every day like so, in no time at all, it will develop into a Tree of Life. Already, the Maple Tree Village and Pine Tree Village have been grown that way.”

“Thank you so much!”

“I know understand the reason you brought us here.”

“I can’t believe we are getting another Tree of Life!”

“Thank you so much!”

And so, the 42 elf refugees that Cob’s team brought were left at the Thuja village to gain their footing.

The Thuja Tree Village was formed.

A month passed and as expected, the Thuja tree developed into a Tree of Life.

The elves of the Thuja village were extremely happy and even the elves of the other villages visited and held a celebration.

A total of 4 villages were on the Brown Mountain now. Now the Brown Mountain was the most powerful and firm base of the elves.

Now no one can invade this place.

There were only 2 months left of the 6th exam’s time period.

‘It probably won’t make much difference if I just spend the remaining 2 months just hanging out but...’

But I don't do that.

There was still something I haven't settled yet.

Two months, that would be plenty of time to resolve it, a simple job.

I go to the eldest mother and said.

"I have somewhere I must go for a while."

"Where are you going to go?"

Asked the eldest mother in surprise.

"I have to go to the forest of the dead."

"In the west..... you mean where the lycanthropes are located."

"Yes."

Indeed.

The silver clan.

Leon Silver!

The time has come for me to enact my revenge.

They will have heard by now that Baron Bastian has been destroyed by Odin.

The dark magicians have been defeated, the last remaining enemy to the elves are the silver clan.

"While I have been here, I have become stronger. I now wish to put an end to our ill-fated relationship."

"Won't it be too dangerous by yourself?"

"For when I camp at night, it would be enough if I could have one warrior with me."

“You just need one warrior?”

“Yes.”

I don’t know what she’s thinking but the eldest mother smiled.

“Just wait a second.”

“Yes.”

“Honey~!”

“.....huh?”

In a little bit,

“At most, two days will be plenty. Let’s go.”

Derrick would be my company.

I somehow felt like I’m using a cheat code for beating a stage 1 boss monster. How to put it, the tension of revenge has drastically decreased.



I used the Divine Protection of the Wind to run with Derrick. We quickly made it out of Brown Mountain and entered the forest of the dead.

As soon as we stepped into the forest, I vividly remembered the memories of that day.

Yes, this is the road. The road where I ran like mad. If I keep going straight.....

My heart began to pound.

‘Hye-su!’

We get near to the spot where Hye-su died and Kang Cheon-sung was left alone to fight Leon Silver. A few steps further was the spot where Jun-ho died.

Are their bodies still there?

The fear started to creep in and suffocated my breath.

I stopped walking and spoke.

“What is it?”

“Just a moment.”

“Alright.”

Derrick sat on a boulder to rest.

I went blank where I stood.

I’m scared.

I think I’ll go crazy from the fear.

‘Should I back out now?’

The idea of giving up seduces me.

‘Okay. What use would that be now?’

Mere lycanthropes.....

The silver clan doesn’t pose a threat anymore, and it is just the past. Doing this won’t bring back the ones who died!

‘Alright, let’s just go back..... ’

‘No. I think not seeing the corpses and just passing this by would be worse.’

My head became pure white. The memories kept getting rooted up in my head.

‘Did those people really die, what happened to their bodies, are they alive and playing us... Those thoughts won’t go away. Don’t you agree, Hyun-ho?’ – I think this is a flashback memory from something Hye-su said.

‘Right.’

I realized that I haven't grown at all.

That Kim Hyun-ho from then is just like now, the same and hadn't grown a single bit.

'So, let's go together.'

Alright, let's go, Hye-su.

'Let's verify that they died and properly dispose of them. I'm too scared alone, but I think it'll be okay if I go with you, Hyun-ho.'

Let's go together.

I'll be strong.

Even though I'm scared, I will put one foot ahead of the other. Because that's how I'll grow.

I take a step. Derrick, who had been resting, walked beside me again.

We arrived at that spot.

.....there was nothing in the spot.

Neither Hye-su, nor Kang Cheon-sung was there.

I walk a little further and I cannot see Jun-ho's body either.

'Where are they?'

The Guider skill doesn't show me anything either.

Kang Cheon-sung, Lee Hye-su, and Lee Jun-ho, it does not tell me where they are.

Is it because they are not alive? Or is it because they don't exist in this world?

Considering the courage this took the results were disappointing and I felt defeated.

"Is there something you are looking for?"

Asked Derrick.

“No.”

I started to talk again.

The thing the guider skill showed me was one thing.

“Let’s go. I think I know where Leon Silver is.”

“Okay.”

We faced southeast and moved. The cooldown time had ended so I used the Divine Protection of the Wind again to run alongside Derrick and we reached our destination in an instant.

After racing at the speed of lightning, a well moonlit hill began to appear.

“I can feel it.”

Derrick looked up towards the hill and pulled out both his swords.

I too summoned my Neilson H2 guns and spoke.

“I have a request.”

“What is it?”

“Please leave Leon Silver to me.”

“I will.”

Derrick’s body flew forward.

“I just have to kill everyone but the strongest one.”

He was correct.

Chapter 92

The End (Part 2)

The Silver clan was in a slumped state.

At the bottom of the hill, the leader of the Silver clan was sitting on a boulder like a king, Leon Silver was emitting a chilly air.

All the lycanthropes were being wary of his gaze and couldn't make a noise.

Leon Silver's thoughts were quite complicated.

'How could there be such a strong human?'

There was one.

Even now when he recalled that human, he got a feeling that he had never felt before from any opponent.

It was terror.

'Did they call him the Count of Wolfenbrooke?'

The Count of Wolfenbrooke, Odin.

That inhuman monster, with overwhelming strength, ruled the battlefield.

The Silver clan that allied with Baron Bastian, transformed into humans and fought stealthily on the battlefield.

Even in their transformed to human states, feeble humans could be killed without trouble.

As payment for their cooperation, the prisoners caught in battle, after de-weaponizing them, were sent into the forest and repopulated the human ranch.

And if the war was won, the next target would be the Brown Mountain elves.

The Brown Mountain was his target since he was young.

That was because of his father.

It was an old story, since about 20 years ago.

The young son that had all grown up, Leon, challenged his father to a fight to be the head of the family. The position was taken from his father and, as the defeated, his father took his group and left the territory.

But not many months after he had left, his father returned. Having lost all of his group, he returned alive alone.

“The only place for us to live is this forest here.”

His father always said that until his death, emphasizing that a safe existence was only possible in this forest. He said that only this place was allowed for the lycanthropes.

That provoked the hot-blooded Leon Silver.

‘For the safety of our Silver clan, we have to stay planted in this forest?’

Are the Brown Mountain elves that scary?

So much so that us valiant lycanthrope cannot even begin to defeat them?

From that moment on, Leon Silver’s dream started.

Coincidentally, refugees came pouring into the forest from Baron Bastian’s territory.

That was when Leon Silver had the idea to grow the size of his family.

That was the human ranch.

After that event, he changed into his human form and wandered Bastian’s territory and dragged humans back into the forest.

In preparation for possibly fighting an elf, he gathered any usable human weapons as

well.

With the plentiful food as the foundation for the Silver clan, it grew, and the petition for cooperation came from Baron Bastian.

They had the joint goal of targeting the elves and Leon Silver gladly accepted the offer.

It was good up to there.

But there was something Leon Silver had overlooked.

He had not even considered the idea that there would be someone stronger than he.

He was born the strongest, and was the unparalleled strong leader Leon Silver, and his arrogance was obvious.

That was when he met Odin on the battlefield.

Aura Master.

The long sword he wielded had a blue energy emitted from it like waves, then it made an explosion and in an instant 1/3 of his clan was killed.

Leon Silver felt fear for the first time in his life and he immediately ran and returned to the forest.

‘The humans I met about 2 years ago were nothing.’

The spirit summoner who used a strange long-distance weapon and the strong lad who used some odd martial arts.

Especially the martial artist that fought with him until the end gave him a deep wound, he had been the strongest human he had ever met.

He thought, oh a human can be this strong.

He thought well that’s it.

A complete misjudgment.

That was nothing.

A human, as it turns out, can become a monster like Count Odin of Wolfenbrooke.

There was not just weak humans like there were at the human ranch.

‘Baron Bastian won’t be able to defeat him, and if he falls, the next is us...!’

Leon Silver became restless.

A guy that was a monster like Odin, as soon as the war was over, would bring his army to kill him.

He sent an army before to suppress the Silver clan. This time too, he won’t let them off.

‘Should we run?’

It seemed wasteful since the restoration of the human ranch with the captured war prisoners was already in place.

But if that monstrous Odin comes for them, they’re finished.

‘Okay, we’ll run and hide deep in the forest. First, go into the center of the forest and steal the red apes’ territory and settle there for now.’

The easiest target were the red apes.

After that, if Odin hunts them down to there, he could run deeper into the forest.

Leon Silver thought that if they did that, they won’t chase him that relentlessly.

But actually, Leon Silver had no idea that a different enemy, not Odin, would come for them.

Kwakwakwakwang-!

“Kuang!”

“Kuek!”

It was like a stone falling from the middle of the sky. No, not a stone, an incredible flame.

Hwalululu-!

The flame spread in all directions and in an instant, it enveloped the lycanthropes of the Silver clan.

“What, what is this!”

At the shocking and sudden scene before him, Leon Silver jumped up in alarm.

Looking closely, from the center of the tsunami of flames, there appeared to be a figure.

With a slender build and wielding two swords. And from those swords came the deathly flames.

And pointed ears.....

“An elf?!”

“Right.”

The flames suddenly stopped.

When the flames stopped, the red smoke dissipated and an unbearable horror could be seen!

The only lycanthrope alive from the Silver clan was just Leon Silver.

Everyone else were merely heaps of ash.

Propagating for nearly 20 years in order to grow to its current size, all the children of the Silver clan were killed in an instant.

And the one responsible for it was the target he was aiming for, an elf.

Just one elf!

“Ah, ahhh...!”

Leon Silver could not come to his senses from the shock.

How futile could all this be?

It was a horror that seems unreal.

How could one elf have completed such destruction in the blink of an eye?

Everything of his became ash from the fire in a few seconds!

“Are you Leon Silver?”

“That, that I am!”

Stricken with fear, Leon Silver was barely able to give an answer.

He was no longer the ruler of this forest, nor the top of the food chain, any longer.

Before his eyes was an absolute slayer and in front of that he was a nothing, a weakling.

“You were looking for a chance to get at us elves. How does it feel? To see the true power of the elves.”

“That is.....”

“Does it look like if you got stronger and stronger that you would have been able to defeat us?”

“Ahhh...!”

Leon Silver was unable to say anything.

How did he, born the strongest of them all, become such a weak being?

After seeing Odin in the battlefield, fear struck him yet again here.

“Why is it that you and humans do not know how to be content. Did he not teach you anything, your father who barely escaped my hands?”

Only now did he recall the advice of his dead father.

'He should have!'

Leon Silver suddenly felt so angry.

'He should have told me before! That they were this strong, he should have told me!'

Leon Silver did not consider how his short temper and ambition drove him not to use his ears to listen to wise advice.

"But the foe you must battle is not me. Go on."

With that, the old elf turned his back.

Leon Silver was confused.

'Then who?'

Then.

Piercing through the black smoke, a human appeared.

"Been a long time?"

The human looked him straight in the eyes.

Leon Silver recognized him right away.

The human he lost before.



As it turns out – the fear was just a memory.

That was what I realized when I reunited with Leon Silver.

Seeing the fear that struck Leon Silver from the unbelievable performance from Derrick, seeing that, it makes it hard to fear him anymore.

"Been a long time?"

I say.

“You.....”

“So you do remember me? That’s a relief.”

On Leon’s face, the hostility was clear.

“You involved the elves.”

“Well, I guess you could say that.”

I pointed the Neilson H2 at Leon Silver.

“Now, avoid it.”

“What?”

Tang!

The instant it fired, Leon Silver deftly ducked to his left.

The bullet in the gun moves close to the speed of sound so it cannot be that he as listening to the sound to avoid it.

It can also be said that upon seeing the spark, that it would be too late to react.

Leon Silver is reacting to my finger pulling the trigger and moving based on that.

“You’re good.”

“Damn you!”

“Dodge this too.”

This time, I shot with the double guns.

Taang-

“Kuhuk!”

Leon Silver was shot in his side and moaned.

He reacted well and dodged one but with the other gun, I anticipated his movement and fired.

Within 10 m.

Thanks to the shooting skill, my accuracy is 100%.

Aiming for where he will dodge to and firing two shots, there was no way he could avoid it.

“You!”

Leon Silver came barreling towards me.

“Divine Protection of the Wind!”

I used the Divine Protection of the Wind and jumped safely into the air.

I lightly somersaulted over Leon’s head and shot at his shoulder with the gun in my left hand.

Tang-

“Kuk!”

As he was shot in the right shoulder, Leon Silver stumbled.

“Kuahhhh!”

Having landed behind him, Leon Silver turned his whole body and swiped with his left hand. His sharp nails nearly pierced me.

“Teleport.”

Pat!

In an instant I was behind Leon Silver’s back.

Tang!

“Kuk!”

Shooting him in the left knee, he buckled and Leon Silver kneeled.

“Kuah! I’m going to kill you-!”

I wielded both guns in response.

I knocked his left hand away and intercepted his right hand with a guard. Then I twisted my left wrist and pulled the trigger.

Tang!

“Kuk!”

Leon Silver was shot in his right wrist.

In desperation, he swung his left hand but once again I guarded against it and with the same movement, shot his left shoulder.

Tang-

“Kuk!”

The effect of training on the mu ren zhuang appeared together with the intermediate level 2 reflex skill.

My physical strength was at intermediate level 5 so in comparison with Leon Silver, I was not lacking in strength or reflexes.

It was a body that was at the limits of an elf’s body so of course this was the case.

Having been shot up here and there, his body was a mess. Leon Silver could not stand any longer and collapsed onto the floor.

He was able to make it this far because he was a lycanthrope, if he had been a human, he would have died multiple times over by now.

“How... how did you.....”

As he was dying, Leon Silver had a face of disbelief.

“Humans normally grow pretty fast.”

“Kuk, you fucking.....”

When I placed the gun on his forehead, Leon Silver had a resigned look on his face.

Before I killed him, I asked.

“What did you do to my friends?”

“I killed them.”

“Their bodies.”

“I don’t know.”

Even in this midst, Leon Silver smiled.

“If it is not fresh food, I don’t eat it.”

“.....okay. Then it’s time for you to sleep. Forever.”

Tang!

A red hole was made in his forehead.

Leon Silver died, just like that, with his eyes wide open. His lips, curved up in a smile, made me feel like he did that to upset me.

‘I guess the bodies of examinees disappear. Thank goodness.’

I felt some relief knowing that they weren’t in the bellies of some lycanthropes.

“If you are finished, let us return. We should be back by midday tomorrow.”

At Derrick’s words, I nodded my head.

“Yes, let’s go back.”

I left the hill together with Derrick.

My revenge was finally complete.

Chapter 93

What Happened When I Got Back (Part 1)

In the time left in the Arena, I made the flames of life and spent the time leisurely playing the violin.

I sent the two flames of life to the Maple Tree Village and the Thuja Tree Village. Because of it, the two trees were growing well and all those in the villages were happy.

When I surpassed the Suzuki violin book 6, my skill level increased by a level.

-Reflex (synthesis skill): Knowing how to move your body

*Intermediate level 3: Obtain godlike athletic and reflex abilities

When my level increased by just one, my violin playing skills suddenly greatly increased as well.

With my violin playing improving smoothly every single day, my elf audience grew too.

And when the exam time period was nearly up, another happy result happened.

-Spirit summons (main skill): summon spirits and obtain the power of nature.

*Spirits that can be summoned: Sylph, Kasa

*Entry level 7: summons time 3 hours 30 minutes

I spent my time in the Tree of Life so the spirit summons increased again!

‘This time, I barely raised it one in a whole year.’

I don’t know how many years it will take to raise it to the next level.

It seems impossible now to increase the spirit summons level for free by using the Tree of Life.

That's because I don't think the next, the 7th exam, will be one where I can leisurely spend years with the elves.

'It might be that in the next exam, I will have to say goodbye to the elves.'

Looking at the flow of the exams thus far, in context, the next exam will have to do with those dark magicians, I'm sure of it.

'Did he say his name was John Omento?'

He was a part of an organization.

Thus, an unknown and suspicious group was planning nefarious things.

Thankfully, I met John Omento the necromancer, so I can use the guider skill to point me in the direction that I need to go in.

'If I had my way, I would want to just stay here but that can't be helped.'

As the exam time end neared, I felt sadness.



-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-Class: 16

-Karma: 0

Mission: protect the elves on Brown Mountain (Achieved)

-Time limit: 31 seconds

Pat!

When the time limit was up, the exam door appeared before me.

'It's finally over!'

I need to hurry home and first, see Min-jeong. With this sprightly body I have starved

12 months!

I quickly entered the exam door and the baby angel greeted me.

“You aren’t going to blow your horn today?”

“I don’t have a hobby of greeting men in heat with a horn.”

“Smart. Well, I guess I should check the results first. Summon board.”

-Name: Kim Hyun-ho

-Class: 21

-Karma: +5,100

-Mission: rest until the next exam

-Time limit: 100 days

For a second, I grew suspicious of my own eyes.

“Hey, is this right? It’s not an error is it?”

“If we are talking about errors, your role is an error.”

“Wow-! Nice!!”

I raised both arms and rejoiced.

Look at that frightful amount of karma! Look at how the class leaped from a 16 to a 21!

This is how much I achieved in my 6th exam!

This exam too, I didn’t do much and it made me wonder if this prize is okay.

“You were told to protect the elves but you practically revived them. You made 3 more elf villages as well, that was some good thinking.”

“I am so good.”

“You formed an alliance with the count of Wolfenbrooke and annihilated the Silver clan and eliminated future trouble. Looking at all those achievements, it would have been okay to even get more than this.”

“Then give me more.”

I said unashamedly.

“Wow, you are so shameless. But did I not say? That how hard you work also plays into the grade.”

“Are you saying I didn’t work hard?”

“Well, then, did you?”

“.....that depends.”

“Don’t lie. And you did raise your spirit summons and gained other benefits so be happy with that. Honestly, even for an examinee like Odin, getting that much karma after clearing an exam is hard.”

“Really?”

“Now now, if you’re all done with your business here, go on back. Facing a man in heat, I feel like I’m gonna to get pregnant.”

“Why don’t you make such bad jokes after you take that wee bundegi off?”

I walked out through the exam door that appeared in thin air.



11 am.

I woke up in the hotel room I stayed in the night of the exam.

I checked my smartphone and there were two texts.

[Cutie wife <3: It's a good morning here~! Have a good day at work!]

[Cutie wife <3: Wahh..... no reply ;(Is it cuz you're on the plane? ㄹ]

Min-jeong thinks I have gone abroad on a business trip and won't be back until this morning.

I should reply now.

[Me: I just arrived at Incheon Airport. I miss you.]

She should be at work now but the reply comes in a few seconds.

[Cutie wife <3: me too ㄹ]

[Me: How dare a new employee use her phone at work? You aren't working are you.]

[Cutie wife <3: ㄹ Hmph, I'm just taking a quick break.]

[Me: ok work hard.]

[Cutie wife <3: you aren't going to say I should just quit?]

Here she starts again.

I send her an appropriate response.

[Me: ㄹ]

[Cutie wife <3: ㄹHmph!!]

[Me: I love you too.]

[Cutie wife <3: Well, I don't like you!]

[Me: And I said I love you too.]

[Cutie wife <3: hahahaha]

[Me: hahahaha]

Ah, sending texts like this, I could feel myself calming down.

[Cutie wife <3: Btw oppa, I'm going to be late today.]

[Me:.....]

[Cutie wife <3: some friends I met from cooking school, we're meeting up. You want to come to?]

I let out a deep sigh.

[Me: I'm tired so I can't. Have fun.]

[Cutie wife <3: I'm so sorry! But when I get home ♥ okay? ♥ <3]

[Me: If you come home past 10, I'll be upset.]

[Cutie wife <3: aww, until 11, okay?]

[Me: do what you want.]

[Cutie wife <3: wahhhh ☹]

Min-jeong sent all kinds of emoticons and was being cute. I think maybe, I'll forgive her, when.

[Cutie wife <3: I'll grant one wish, whatever you want.]

[Me: Anything?]

[Cutie wife <3: Yes, anything <3]

[Me: okay, remember you said anything, okay?]

[Cutie wife <3: okay ☹]

My peeved-ness dissipates easily.

[Me: go and have lots of fun. No, want me to pick you up when you're done?]

[Cutie wife <3: You suddenly changed! What are you going to have me do -_-]

[Me: It's nothing really, it's just that it has come time to show off my amazing prowess.]

[Cutie wife <3: hahahaha that again hahaha]

I whistled while I checked out the hotel and left. My exam grades and other things, this day is going great.

When I have returned home, I focus on how I was going to use the karma prize.

“Show me all my skills.”

-Now showing all skills that examinee Kim Hyun-ho has acquired.

-Main skill: spirit summons (entry level 7).

-Assist skill: physical strength buff (intermediate level 5), guider (entry level 1), and teleport (entry level 4).

-Special skill: skill synthesis

-Synthesis skill: Divine Protection of the Wind (entry level 5), Divine Protection of Fire (entry level 1), reflex (intermediate level 3), flame of life (intermediate level 2), transmission (entry level 1), space bag (entry level 4), shooting (entry level 1).

-Remaining karma: +5,100

“How much do I need to raise my spirit summons to intermediate level 1?”

I focused on spirit summons, which I realized was very important this past time.

At my question, the board began to move its letters.

-Spirit summons (main skill) to raise to intermediate level 1 showing the karma needed.

-Spirit summons (main skill) summon an intermediate spirit and possess the power of nature, absorb the energy of the surrounding nature into the body.

-Summonable spirits: Sylph, Kasa

-Intermediate level 1: summons time 5 hours

-Raising to intermediate level 1 will use 5,100 karma

-Remaining karma: +5,100

‘This thing is a ghost.’

How does it know I have 5,100 karma!

As expected of a main skill, raising it to intermediate level 1 would use a large sum of karma.

But it does seem to be worth it as well.

Even without summoning a spirit, it is because I could use the energy of nature from my body.

‘This completely explains how Derrick is able to run faster than me.’

This also makes it clear how losing a Tree of Life makes the elves weaker.

A body that grows strong with the power of nature.

That specialty of the elves, if I can get an intermediate spirit summons, I can do it too.

The effect I gained would not be just that.

Divine Protection of the Wind.

Divine Protection of Fire.

These two skills also receive strength from the spirit summons. If the spirit summons goes to intermediate level 1, the strength of those two skills will also increase.

‘What about raising my reflex skill?’

From this past 6th exam, I practiced the violin all year long and the reflex skill barely

went up by one.

I think it will continue to be near impossible to raise the reflex skill through training alone.

'Ah, this is a dilemma!'

I grabbed my head and thought and thought, and the skills I want to raise are more than just a few.

But it was impossible to satisfy my greed.

I made a decision.

"I will raise my spirit summons to intermediate level 1!"

I was now, already, a 6th turn examinee. I was looking ahead to the 7th exam.

Having already butt heads with the suspicious dark magic organization, the best tactic to be used when fighting them would be the spirit summons.

'Because dark magic and the power of nature are opposites.'

Last time, while fighting the skinny middle aged necromancer John Omento, I realized this.

-Raising spirit summons (main skill) to intermediate level 1 with 5,100 karma.

Pat!

The light coming from the board washed over my body.

-Remaining karma: 0

"Whew."

Seeing the remaining karma go to 0 made me sigh.

This was the feeling of sadness of a worker that lived paycheck to paycheck seeing his money just pass through his bank account.

Anyway, when the spirit summons raised to intermediate level, something changed inside my body too.

I could feel a strange energy flowing through my body.

‘Is this the power of nature?’

It was warm and felt good and I got the sense it is a good energy.

Because I did not choose aura control as my main skill, my body was still currently at the physical strength buff intermediate level 5, but I can become better with the power of nature.

‘An advanced spirit summons, when compared to Odin’s aura master, won’t lose!’

Derrick showed that to me.

He joined himself with an advanced spirit and had the abilities of a powerful spirit!

At that level, even if my body lagged behind, there was plenty of potential to surpass that limit.

‘I should research more ways to use the shooting and spirit summons together.’

I planned on thinking it over carefully for a while. Since this rest period is 100 days.

[Cutie wife <3: Oh, I made some kimchi jjigae at home.]

After I received the message, I became very hungry.

The elves didn’t eat meat so I too, for 1 year, had to be vegetarian.

‘I hope it has lots of meat in it.’

I looked at the kimchi jjigae left on the gas stovetop.

Inside, the jjigae was half kimchi, half pork.

[Me: Is this a kimchi jjigae or a pork jjigae?]*

(TN: Jjigae translates to stew)

[Cutie wife <3: And that upsets you?]

[Me: You're incredible.]

[Cutie wife <3: haha]

I took out a mountain sized heap of brown rice from the rice pot and ate it with the kimchi jjigae like a beast.

The first time I've had meat in a year! I thought I would go crazy from the taste.

Chapter 94

What happened when I got back (Part 2)

‘Why haven’t I heard from her?’

The time had passed by and it was now past 10 pm. Even so, there was no word from Min-jeong.

‘She’s not a kid or anything, nothing wrong with her staying late to drink but.....’

I had told her that I would come pick her up and not hearing back by now left a bad taste in my mouth.

I sent her a text.

[Me: you having fun? When should I come get you?]

Just then, I got a phone call from Min-jeong.

“Hello? You in Cheonan?”

-Hehe, my honey! Were you waiting eagerly for me to call? Aww baby.

Hmm, yup, this was her drunk voice.

“I was waiting eagerly.”

-Whhhy? Why?

“Cuz I miss you.”

-Hehehe, you missed me? Aww, booboo, I know!

“Where are you?”

-Hehe, my handsome honey.

“.....I am good looking.”

-Lots of money and a good body and a handsome face, my baby has got it all!

“Okay, okay, your rich pushover boyfriend oppa is here.”

-Hehehehehe!

Min-jeong giggled loudly. She’s way beyond drunk.

“Where are you, Min-jeong.”

-This is Arpeggio.

“Arpeggio? Where is that?”

-Arpeggio is..... Arpeggio, hehe!”

It’s probably the name of a bar.

“Is it in Cheonan?”

-Yup!

“I’ll come now, wait there.”

-Hehe, my baby’s coming to get me. I was missing him but he’s coming here. Hehehe.

‘Wow.’

After I hung up the phone, I changed my clothes and went down to the parking garage.

I search for “Arpeggio in Cheonan” in my GPS and there was indeed a bar named that.

How could she drink herself into such oblivion! Some guy could just pick her up and take her.

I followed the highway and raced over. I think I probably should have gotten a couple speeding tickets.

Oh, I had forgot. My car is a good car. It's an SUV so the outside doesn't look that luxurious but everyone always takes notice because it is a Porsche.

'That's right, Min-jeong's friends will be there too. How do I look?'

I glanced over my outfit. I just threw stuff on but it wasn't bad.

They were the clothes that the stewardess Lee Soo-hyun had picked out for me in Copenhagen.

After coming into so much money, even at the basic level I was still buying expensive and good things so no matter what I wore, I would always look pretty good.

More than anything, now that my body is so athletic and buff, no matter what it is, everything looks good.

'This is more than good enough.'

I complimented myself as I drive towards the bar.

With my guider skill, I was able to find Min-jeong easily.

But.....

'What the hell is that guy?'

I was at a loss for words.

Isn't this just a drinking party? Where are all the friends?

A guy that looks like he barely just turned 20 was lending his shoulder to Min-jeong and was just sitting there.

'What kind of situation was this?'

It was even more maddening because he was tall and handsome.

To have to see a thing like this when it has been a year since I have reunited with Min-jeong.

“Oh, are you Min-jeong noona’s boyfriend?”

The young man seemed to recognize me and asked me.

He looked over to Min-jeong resting on his shoulder and seemed embarrassed by it.

“I’m sorry. It’s just she is quite drunk.”

“Where is everyone?”

I was so baffled by it all, that’s what I asked after some silence.

“They all left already.”

“Oh? I see.”

I took Min-jeong’s arms. I tried to shake her shoulders and rouse her awake but she wouldn’t wake up.

I tsk tsk-ed her and piggy backed her.

“We’ll be going.”

I said a light farewell but then.

The young man grabbed a hold of me.

“Hold on please.”

“Yes?”

I was already in a bad mood and the annoyance could be heard in my voice.

The young man looked like he was thinking something then said.

“I’ve heard a lot about you. I heard you have a lot of money and are very well off.”

“Oh really?”

“You drive a nice car and all the clothes and shoes you’re wearing are luxury brand

labels, you're good looking, you must have lots of girls around you."

What's this dick trying to get at?

"So? What do you want me to do about it?"

Now my voice could no longer stay amicable.

"If your feelings aren't sincere, could you give up Min-jeong noona to me?"

"What?"

"I am being very sincere right now. I like her so much I think I'll go crazy. I know that is no excuse but I beg you, please."

He said that and gave a 90 degree bow at the hip, it was quite a scene.

I was so flustered, I just looked at him.

"Hey."

"Yes."

"You seem like you've always had people tell you that you are nice and respectful and well mannered. Your looks are good and you probably got lots of love growing up."

I kept talking to the confused young man.

"But pretending to be that nice, that respectful, that desperately in love, did you think saying those things would make me forgive you?"

".....?!"

The young man's face became frozen.

"You want me to guess more? Did you expect that after something like this I would get in a big fight with Min-jeong and we would break up? Lending your shoulder to a girl who's already taken, you guys sure made a pretty picture. You wanna die?"

"Ah, no, I was just.....!"

“If I see you again, I’ll rip your mouth right out of your face.”

I stared at him head on and the young man’s face turned white.

He seemed like a gentle kid, how disappointing. If he was even a bit of a douche he would have picked a fight with me. In which case, I would have beat the shit out of him.

I asked for the bill at the counter and was told that the friends who left already paid it.

I put Min-jeong in the passenger seat and put the seat belt on her.

I turned on the car and angrily slammed on the pedal. The car is good and sped up in a few seconds.

My insides were bubbling and it was hard to stay calm.

‘How am I supposed to handle this?’

A guy like that was lingering around her? And she went out drinking with him?

I glanced over at Min-jeong.

She had no idea how I was feeling and was just sleeping peacefully. She looked pretty even when she was sleeping and it just made me angrier.

I came back after a year and in my absence, that guy shows up.

And suddenly I exploded in laughter.

I laughed hard.

‘What the fuck am I doing?’

Why am I getting so worked up and upset over dating?

I was in a war with lots of lives at stake and even returned after getting revenge for my dead friends.

Only after doing all of that did I get a rest period of 100 days, so why!

Compared to that, this wasn't even much of a problem so why was I getting so stressed!

I couldn't handle how angry this was making me.

I took out my smartphone and called Hyun-ji.

-Hey, oppa, what's up?

"Let Min-jeong sleep at your place tonight."

-Why?

"I don't want to see her."

-Why are you being like that..... did something happen?

"She was passed out drunk and the guy she was with asked me to let him have her."

-Oh shit.

"I'm heading to you now."

-Oh, okay.

I dropped Min-jeong off at Hyun-ji's studio that was close to my place.

"You okay, oppa?"

"Yeah."

"You don't look okay."

"Nah. I'm just annoyed is all. It's tiresome. What's the point."

"But still oppa, calm down. Min-jeong isn't the type to cheat."

"I know that too."

“If you know, you should let it slide.”

“Why do I have to hold in that kind of stress while I date? Is dating that important?”

“.....”

“Never mind. I’m going.”

“Mm.”

I returned home and haphazardly threw my clothes off and laid down in bed.



“Oooh, oppa.”

Min-jeong turned around in bed and reflexively cuddled into the arms of the person next to her.

But the sudden female voice she heard...

“Eww gross, bitch. Who are you calling oppa?”

“.....?”

Min-jeong eyes shot open.

With an empty stare, she looked at Hyun-ji.

Having come out of Hyun-ji’s embrace, Min-jeong clumsily looked around.

What came into view was a studio that was a little less than 400 square feet.

“Where is this?”

“My room, where else.”

“Why am I here?”

“Oppa dropped you off here and left.”

“Hyun-ho oppa?”

“You got a different oppa?”

Only then did Min-jeong remember.

“Oh, right! Did I call oppa?”

“He said you did. That’s probably why he went to pick you up.”

Min-jeong quickly took out her smartphone and checked her call history.

Thankfully, there was a call record of her and hyun-ho. But seeing that, Min-jeong was confused.

“But why did oppa drop me off here?”

Hyun-ji just made tsk tsk noises at her.

“You don’t remember anything?”

“Well, I drank too much.....”

“Tsk tsk, I thought you were curbing your drinking lately but you friggin’ drank till you blacked out.”

“It was the last day with the cooking academy people..... but what happened? Why didn’t oppa take me home and instead left me here?”

“You fucked up, girl.”

“What? How?”

Min-jeong looked scared. What mistake did she make?

“Who is the guy you were alone with?”

“A-alone with?”

“That’s what he said. When he got there, there were no friends, just you and the guy.”

“What, what do you mean. Everyone else had left?”

“Yep.”

“Oh shit, what do I do! So what happened?”

“He asked oppa to give you up. Who is that improper guy?”

Min-jeong face lost all color.

“What do I do! Is oppa really mad?”

“He must be really mad if he left you here.”

“Um, how mad?”

“He said it’s all very tiresome. He said he doesn’t know what it’s all for. He said dating isn’t so important to him that he would be willing to bear this kind of stress for. If you play this wrong, you’ll lose everything at once.”

Min-jeong was scared.

Min-jeong hurried and got dressed.

“Where are you going, at this hour?”

“I have to go home!”

“It’s dawn right now.”

“Doesn’t matter, I have to go! It’ll be too late if I don’t get there and beg right now!”

“So you do know. Want me to call you a taxi?”

“Yeah!”

Hyun-ji made a call and gets a taxi.

Min-jeong was anxious and didn’t know what to do and kept asking Hyun-ji if oppa was really mad.

“It would be a good thing if he was just mad. Then you can appease him.”

“But?”

“He looked like he was sick of it and just wanted to call it quits.”

“Oh my God! What am I going to do! I’m totally screwed!”

“Well who told you it’d be a good idea to around flirting? Were you still doing that here and there?”

“It’s not like that!”

Min-jeong shouted, on the verge of tears.

“My cooking school friends just were pranking me for fun! Oh my God, what am I going to do!”

“What do you mean, if begging doesn’t work, that’s it.”

“Are you going to keep talking like that just cuz this isn’t you?”

Min-jeong let out her anger too.

Hyun-ji asked in a surprised voice.

“Were you guys that serious?”

“Yes! Did it look like I was fooling around with Hyun-ho oppa to you?”

“Yeah, that’s how you’ve always been. Isn’t that all stuff oppa knew too before he dated you?”

At those words, Min-jeong went blank.

Because of this, that was how Hyun-ho might start seeing her now too.

Hyun-ho liked girls that were demure and well behaved. That was why Min-jeong looked to Hyun-ho while she tried hard and gained his trust.

Because Hyun-ho knew she used to go around with Hyun-ji to play around, she tried so hard to absolve herself of that image.

But because of this one incident, she might lose all her efforts in an instant.

As soon as the taxi arrived, Min-jeong frantically sped over.

Chapter 95

What happened when I got back (Part 3)

The morning light that peeped through my curtains woke me up. Behind my back, I could feel a familiar warmth and touch.

I wonder when she got back.

Min-jeong was holding me tight from behind and was asleep.

‘She came.’

It seems that as soon as she got her wits about her when she woke up at Hyun-ji’s, she quickly returned.

I approve of that kind of behavior and it got rid of some of the anger from last night.

But I can’t just let this go because of that.

I carefully loosened myself from her and got up. I got out the bedroom and tried to sleep some more in the guest room bed.

But then a while later,

Kik.

In that gap, Min-jeong woke up and came in and quietly laid down next to me.

Without saying anything, she inserted herself into my arms. I’ve done wrong, please forgive me, an expression full of aegyo.

“.....”

“.....”

We didn’t say anything.

I couldn't quite grasp the words I was supposed to say.

The slightly heartless decisions I had been thinking of won't come out of my mouth.

Then Min-jeong says something.

"Oppa."

"Yeah."

"I messed up."

"....."

Min-jeong struck first.

"But please listen to my side. It's not an excuse. I really am sorry. But please listen."

"Okay."

"That guy last night is 20 year old Kim Min-suk."

"He's young. Are you gonna to say you had no idea that a guy like that has a mad crush on you?"

Just you try and say you didn't know. A girl with noonchi as keen as you would never not know.*

(TN: Used in an earlier chapter. Noonchi is the idea that you can read the mood. I don't know that there is an English word that is equivalent to it. In Western terms, I guess it can be called emotional intelligence or considered something you would see in a high context culture.)

"I did know. I pretended not to."

"And?"

"I pretended not to know but my cooking school friends kept trying to hook me up with him as a joke. They kept saying things like 'I think he likes you, try calling him,' stuff like that."

“Those bitches.”

“That’s what I’m saying. Last night’s drinking party, they brought him to it without me knowing. I was flustered but that’s no excuse to just up and leave either so I just forced myself to stay.”

“Is that why you drank until you blacked out at a place where there was a guy that had crush on you was?”

“I’m sorry, oppa. It was the first time drinking in a while and I couldn’t gauge the amount I could drink. I won’t ever put it to my lips again.”

Min-jeong was asking for forgiveness for all the parts she had done wrong.

“But those girls just left you alone with him and took off?”

“I’m sure they did it all just for fun. I deleted all their numbers. I won’t ever hang out with them again.”

“Why on earth did they do that?”

“They’re probably jealous.”

“Jealous?”

“Last time when you came to pick me up, they were all really jealous. Not only that but Min-suk is really popular at the school too and he likes me so they probably chalked it up as a joke and did it.”

“Sounds about right.”

Just because they were jealous, they were going to break up another couple and call it a joke?

“Girls are just like that. Ji-hyun and Hyun-ji aren’t like that which is why we they are close friends.”

Now that I hear it, it wasn’t wrong that Min-jeong felt resentful and like she was wrongfully accused about this.

She had always tried to keep her distance with Kim min-suk and that melted my anger.

Aside from Min-jeong's heavy drinking last night, there wasn't really anything she did wrong.

'Yeah, from her perspective, I can see how I made a big deal and got angry over a small issue.'

I had come back after an entire year.

I had been fighting for my life during that long period of time. And to come back and see everything that happened last night just infuriated me.

But for Min-jeong, we went from doing great all this time and suddenly our relationship was on the rocks in just a day.

"Min-jeong."

"Yes, Oppa."

"Do you think we just don't mesh?"

At that, Min-jeong must have gotten nervous because she started hugging me tighter.

"I know you are trying hard to accommodate me and to match my preferences. How could I not know? But I can't give you that same amount of attention."

"That's not true, oppa."

"I can't say but there are times now and again when I will have to leave for work. It is such hard work that I have to give it my all. That's why....."

"....."

"So when I am back here, when I am with my girl, I just want to be happy and comfortable. I don't want to worry and I don't want to stress. I guess this makes me insincere and inconsiderate."

"Don't say that."

“I feel you have to go through hardship because you have to match a person like me and I’m sorry.”

“I’m not suffering or anything like that. I have never felt disappointed in you, oppa.”

“.....Really?”

“Yes.”

Min-jeong wiggled over onto my other side and looked at me straight on.

“I won’t want for more. I’ll be happy just spending this time like we are. I’ll try harder. So that you’ll be more comfortable.”

That instant, Min-jeong’s eyes could not have looked prettier.

I met my lips to hers.

Upper lip, bottom lip, we kissed softly and I pulled her close. A soft touch.

“Oppa.”

“Yeah.”

“The wish?”

“Wish?”

“Yesterday, you said anything..... I was so excited from looking forward to it.”

I exploded in laughter.

I laid her down and got on top of her.

“Do you know what my wish is?”

“What is it?”

“Not stopping.”

Min-jeong's face grew a bright red. We kissed again and I took off her shirt.

"Until I am satisfied, I won't stop for anything."

"Do what you want oppa."

Min-jeong's eyes lit up as she hugged my neck.

I don't know how long it was.

The curtains were closed and there was no clock, so I couldn't tell where the sun was.

For that long while, so much so that even I felt tired, we made love.

Ding dong~

She must have been exhausted because Min-jeong, who had fallen asleep on my arm, woke up from the text alarm.

It must be a girl's instinct.

Min-jeong reflexively grabbed the smartphone by her head.

"Who is it?"

"It's Hyun-ji. She's worried about me."

"Tell her you're okay."

"Yeah."

I don't know what Min-jeong found to be so funny because she smiled giddily as she sent the text.

I peeked over at it.

[I lost my mind twice today heehee <3]

"Hold on, halt thy fingers!"

“Heehee!”

“I said halt!”*

(TN: He was using old Korean and talking like a king would when giving orders)

But a girl’s fingers are like bolts of lightning. The message got sent.

“If, if you send a text like that.....!”

A moment later, I got a text from Hyun-ji.

[Hyun-ji: Woah, you’re a genius]

“YAAHH! Yoo Min-jeong! Come here!”

“Gyak, I’m sorry!”

“Is saying sorry just a habit for you?! The person on the other end is my baby sister! Are you two crazy! Are you!”

“Aww, oppa~.”

And like that, we bickered back and forth for a while.

And that’s how the eventful 6th turn break started.



I decided to quit the violin lessons.

The teacher said I had talent and tried to convince me to not quit. But trying to raise my reflex skill with this would be impossible so I quit.

‘I should find a different method now.’

Should I try the piano?

I shook my head.

I'm done with the music now.

Seeing a note on a piece of paper just disgusts me. Music was never my style.

More than that, practicing martial arts that I can actually use seems like a better idea.

'Hold on, why didn't I think of this before?'

I suddenly thought of something.

'I wonder if I can take guns like a rifle or grenade in the spacial storage.'

But the ingredients I used to create the storage space was teleport and the item bag.

If I could carry weapons like that in the item bag, the research center should have given me a grenade from the get go."

"But the item bag and storage space are different skills. Should I try it?"

First, I called to Odin. He too should be back from the Arena by now.

-Mr. Kim Hyun-ho. How did you exam go?

Odin answered welcomingly.

"I cleared it perfectly."

-Perfectly... you say. Seeing how you led the elves to victory, you must have received a grand prize.

"Yes, thanks to you."

-That is a good thing. But what is it you have called about?

"I was wondering if you can put weapons like grenades into an item bag."

-That is impossible.

".....Is that so?"

-If that was possible, don't you think I would have put this and that away in the item bag since the beginning? Weapons and electronics can be stored in the item bag, but you cannot take them out in the Arena."

"Do you think it's not allowed because it's cheating?"

-I don't think that we are allowed to break the order of civilization in the Arena by bringing in technology like that. Before, America tried to make a generator for the sun in the Arena and even though it was built there correctly, it did not work.

Such a thing happened?

It's impressive that America even attempted such a feat.

"But it would be possible if I use karma to itemize it?"

-That would probably work but how much karma do you think it would take to itemize all the parts for a solar generator?

"Haha, I guess you're right."

Just imagining it made me cringe with how much karma that would cost.

If you could store it but that stuff could not be taken out in the Arena, then the storage space was probably not be able to be used that way either.

'Loopholes definitely don't work.'

There is no way around it. So it can't be used with weapons, I have to make myself stronger.

-Sounds like you have lots to think about.

"Yes. I have to become stronger, no matter what."

-You want to be stronger.....

I got the feeling Odin was mulling something over.

-You really want to be stronger?

“Of course.”

-Do you remember that when I first decided to help you, I received money?

“Yes.”

-But I wasn't able to help you and in payment for that, I said pick an item that costed 1000 karma.

“I remember.”

-Why do you think the number was 1000 karma?

“Excuse me?”

I got a strange feeling.

When I think about what he just said, I do feel like I almost remembered something.

“Is there, perhaps, an examinee that sells karma for money?”

-Correct.

That's what Odin meant.

The reason that it was 1000 karma!

That was the price of karma for 10M USD.

You can buy karma with money!

I had not thought of that before.

“Some may like money but still, there is an examinee that sells karma for money?”

-There is. But I didn't tell you this information. Same for Chairman Park Jin-seong. Why do you think that is?

“Why is that?”

-Examinees that sell their karma for money, those are people crazy only for money. Who do you think are people like that?

Something crossed my mind.

I remembered when Odin cursed them with a loud voice.

“The Chinese examinees?”

-You do remember. You are absolutely right. In their efforts to collect majeong, which is worth money, they are crazy people who even kill people in the Arena. Karma transactions usually have to be done with them. That is why I didn't mention it.

“.....”

-I didn't want you to have to interact with such poor characters.

“I understand.”

-But if you really want to work with them, I will arrange a meeting for you.

“You, Odin, personally?”

-If I am on the other side of the table, they won't dare to try anything. Also, I don't want to divulge your identity to those Chinese bastards.

“The flames of life?”

-Yes. That is what I am most worried about. A skill that can save a person's life can make a lot of money. There is no way they wouldn't make a play for you.

Odin was right.

If they are crazy people that kill humans to collect majeong, they are more than capable of such crimes.

-I am worried nonetheless. It is oddly widely known in the Arena community that Chairman Park Jin-seong searched high and low for a cure for his disease. And now Chairman Park Jin-seong has publicly made a full recovery. So what do you think everyone that knows about that is thinking?

“ ”

Chapter 96

Karma Transaction

Odin continued to say.

-It is already known that someone cured Chairman Park Jin-seong. But there are only a few people who know that that person is you.

The only other person that knew this fact was Odin.

But I was sure the Korean Arena research center had their suspicions and probably already guessed it.

Chairman Park Jin-seong took me out from the research center and not long after that, he made a complete recovery.

-Whether it happens sooner or later, Kim Hyun-ho's identity will become revealed. In preparation for that, you have to become stronger as fast as you can, even by just a day, to be able to protect yourself.

"So that is why you told me about the karma transaction?"

-Yes. You even have to resort to using that to become stronger as fast as possible.

Odin continued.

-The karma cost is 1 million USD per 100 karma. If you pay the 10 m USD, you can get an item equal to that value of 1000 karma. If there is an item you want, that would be ideal, but if what you need is karma, then that item will have to be refunded through the mission board's refund system.

"So in reality it is 1 m USD for 50 karma."*

(TN: Remember that if you return an item, you can get a 50% karma refund on it from the system.)

That's incredibly expensive.

That means in order to buy 1000 karma it would cost 10 million dollars or 10 billion won.

-If you give me the money, I can purchase the karma and deal with them for you.

"Would that be alright?"

-I owe you quite a bit. My daughter is healthy and thanks to allying with the Brown Mountain elves, I received a higher prize than I expected in the last exam.

"Really? I am glad to hear that."

That the alliance with the elves yielded such results for Odin was a good thing.

-I will give you my account number so if you want, you can put the amount of money you want to exchange into the account and give me a call.

"I understand. Thank you very much."

That Odin would make the transaction in my place gave me a great sense of relief.

After I hung up, I sat deep in thought.

Currently in my Swiss account I have about 28 billion won. (~\$28M USD)

So for about 20 million USD I can get an item worth 2000 karma. And if I get it refunded into karma, that's only 1000 karma.

'That's too little.'

I need more money.

I received a lot of money from Chairman Park Jin-seong so I am not really greedy for more but with this, I would have to concentrate more on making some money.

While I was thinking about it, I quickly made a call to Chairman Park Jin-seong.

This old man... he wouldn't suddenly decide to stop answering my calls because he got

everything he needed from me, would he?

Thankfully, Chairman Park Jin-seong picked up right away.

“How unexpected. You picked up.”

-Asshole, I’m not that disloyal. Why are you calling?

“I have to make some money.”

Chairman Park Jin-seong momentarily went silent.

Then he said.

-Are you going to buy karma?

Wow, he’s quick for sure.

“Yes.”

-Tsk, it is not good to get mixed up with those Chinese folk. Why do you think I made you come to work in cabin in the woods and kept you hidden?

“I am sure it was to keep my identity hidden. I am thankful for that.”

-Well at least you know it. Alright, how much money do you need?

“The more the better.”

-Wouldn’t 10 billion won (10 million USD) do? If it’s just that much I can just give it to you. I was going to give you that as a bonus anyway.

“If you would, I would be happy to take it. But I need more. Is there no other old man like you that may die today or tomorrow?”

-Ah, you speak so disgracefully. Why would there not be? I am already stressed about that.

“You are stressed?”

-That old man who made the cars with the airbags that won't work.

".....Future Automobile?"

-Yep, Chairman Han Man-young. That old fart has been bothering me lately and keeps asking me how I got cured.

"And did you tell him?"

-Am I crazy? I never said that I was incurable but that it was all just for show. But that old fart, I get the feeling that they didn't believe me. He knows a decent amount about the Arena, you see.

"If I could cure him completely, how much do you think he would pay me?"

-I suppose that would depend on how much longer he lives. Even if he gets cured, if he believes that he doesn't have much time left to live, don't you think he won't pay much for it? He's kind of a stingy old man.

"But Chairman, you got treatment and are good as new."

-That's right. That old man, seeing me recover and returning to work motivated him a lot. If I can talk to him well about it, I think he would probably pay up to 80 billion won. (~80 million USD)

"Didn't you say he's stingy?"

-He won't just waste money or use it haphazardly. The founder of Future Auto was like that too. But if he is able to afford that, he would gladly pay the sum.

80 billion!

Then I can do about 10m USD and get 4,000 karma.

"80 billion is quite a lot."

-Yes. Even though Jinseong Electric Corporation is the best in the nation, we can't catch up to the Future Company yet. Anyway, you want an introduction?

"Yes, but I don't want to personally meet him. I would like to use your secretary to

deliver the flames.”

-Understood. Then with the 10 billion won and the introduction, my debt is paid?

“Yes, thank you.”

My heart is pounding.

If I make loads of money this way and can purchase karma, my strength will soar.



2 days later, I received a text from Chairman Park Jin-seong.

[Chairman Park Jin-seong: 70]

70b.....

Now with the 10b that Chairman Park Jin-seong deposited plus my current balance, I had 108b won.

‘Incredible.’

Then I can use \$100M to get 10,000 karma item.

Even if I were to change the items to receive as karma, that’s still 5,000 karma!

I can get the same amount of karma as I won in this most recent 6th turn exam!

‘I can always make more money.’

I don’t think using money a waste at all.

There will always be rich people like Chairman Park Jin-seong or Chairman Han Man-young of Future Auto who will want my treatment.

I sent a reply to Chairman Park Jin-seong.

[Me: I will do it. I will begin the treatment as soon as the money is deposited into my Swiss account.]

A moment later, I was contacted again.

But this time, it wasn't Chairman Park Jin-seong, but was Jin-seong group's head of the third secretarial office, Lee Jung-shik, instead.

-Hello, how are you.

-Hi, it's been a long time.

-Beginning tomorrow, someone from our office will be by every morning. What time would be good for you?

"10 am would be good. I moved so let me give you my new address."

I gave him the address of the new penthouse I moved to.

-The money will be deposited this afternoon or midday tomorrow so please check it.

"Yes."

Transferring 70b right away, Future Group is incredible.

I contacted Odin.

-Have you decided?

"Yes, tomorrow by midday I will deposit \$100M.

-Woah, sounds like it'll be a huge deal. All in karma?

"Yes."

-Got it. Here's my account number.

I wrote down Odin's account number. It too was an Arena bank in Switzerland.

That afternoon, using the mobile app linked to the Swiss bank, I got an alert. The money from Chairman Park Jin-seong and Chairman Han Man-young was all deposited.

[91,664,056.48 (CHF)] (~95 million USD)

That is the amount in Swiss francs in my account.

Calculating the American dollar and Swiss franc, 100 million dollars was 93,560,320 francs.

‘Huh? The amount isn’t quite enough.’

I gave Odin a call.

“I am so sorry but could I borrow 2m francs and pay you back later?”

-Ha, just send the 90m francs.

“I am so sorry.”

-Don’t mention it.

Like that, I transferred 90m francs to Odin and all I had left is 1.6m francs.

In Korean money it was about 1.9billion won (\$1.9M).

Maybe it was because such a large sum came in and then left, but the 1.9 billion won seemed like chump change now.

‘Money is only temporary.’

How else can I make money?

Saudi kings or the Rockefeller family’s money... if I could get them, making a few trillion wouldn’t be just a dream.

‘I wonder if changing that much money to karma would even be possible?’

The karma might become so rare that the prices may skyrocket.



An employee from the 3rd secretarial office from Jin-seong group came to find me at 10 am. Min-jeong had gone to work and wasn't home which is why I picked this time.

In the black bottle the employee handed me, I put in two flames of life.

"Please tell him that they have to be consumed within the day. And the treatment time is 20 days."

"Understood."

The employee treated the bottle precious as he left.

I anxiously awaited a call from Odin to come.

'It's not like it can be done instantly, I should relax and give it some time.'

I spent the days giving flames of life to the employee every morning.

Every now and then, I checked the balance on the credit card I gave to Hyun-ji to use, lately she was losing her reservations about spending and was starting to spend a couple 10,000 won (\$10) at cafés and restaurants.

I was going to say something to her but held it in. it's really not that much.

We would still be able to live very comfortably in our everyday lives with the remaining balance in the Swiss account.

A week went by.

During that time, Chairman Park Jin-seong called and he said that Chairman Han Man-young of Future Auto was very pleased and wanted to meet me.

Of course, I refused.

Because I don't want my identity exposed.

And then, coincidentally, the call I'd been waiting for arrived.

-The transaction was completed successfully.

“Really?”

-Even those Chinese bastards won’t cheat on such a big transaction with someone like me. Anyhow, when time allows, you will come to Denmark?

“I will. I will go right away on a flight tomorrow.”

-Buy your ticket and let me know your arrival time.

“Yes.”

I immediately went to the airline’s homepage to search and bought a ticket that would be leaving the next day.

The plane that would be leaving tomorrow at 1 pm had a first class seat left so I quickly nabbed it.

When Min-jeong got home from work, I told her I would be going to Denmark.

“Again?”

“Mm, I have work.”

“I guess you have lots of work in Denmark?”

“Yep.”

“Oppa, you’re so cool. Going to Europe for business. Aw, I want to go abroad too.”

“Tell me when you get vacation days. I’ll take you someplace nice.”

“Really?”

Min-jeong’s eyes started glittering.

It was so cute, I stroked her hair.

“But you can’t tell Hyun-ji. She’ll nag to come with us.”

“Hehe, okay.”

That day, Min-jeong was in high spirits and she prepared a grand meal.

The next day, I gave two flames of life to the employee who came by at 10am and told him that I will be pausing treatments for a couple days due to a business trip.

I’m sure Chairman Han Man-young won’t throw a fit for a couple days.

‘Even if he’s unsatisfied, what can he do?’

With a light heart, I headed to Incheon airport and got myself on the plane to Denmark.

Arriving at the Copenhagen airport and going through customs and into a taxi, the whole thing was now second nature. Not like I’ve done this *only* a few times now...

At the room of the underground restaurant of the hotel, like always, I reunited with Odin.

“Welcome.”

“The goods?”

“Everything is wet. Don’t worry.”

With that, Odin summoned a bunch of items.

“Summon, twenty item backpacks.”

With that, twenty large backpacks appeared at once, filling the room to the brim.

“Uh, what is all this?”

“They are item backpacks. It is like the item bag but it is more expensive as it is larger. They are each a 500 karma item.”

I took all 20 item backpacks.

When the ownership was passed to me, I de-summoned them and made them disappear.

Then I summoned just one back out and checked the item on the board.

-Item backpack (large): things that have not been itemized can be stored and pass through the exam door. The magic treated leather does not rip.

*Size: 61x43x30 (-500)

Chapter 97

Karma Transaction (2)

"I will exchange all 20 item backpacks for karma."

When I said that, the words on the board changed.

-20 Item Backpack (Large) will be exchanged for 5,000 karma.

-Will you exchange?

"I will."

Pat!

A light shone momentarily from the board.

-Item Backpack (Large) 20 have been used.

-You have acquired 5,000 karma.

-Remaining karma: +5,000

"I really did get 5,000 karma."

"Congratulations. You will be much stronger with that."

"I really had no idea you could buy karma with money. No matter how precious money is, a life is on the line in the exams so to sell karma....."

Odin drank all the alcohol in his glass.

Then he started grinding his teeth as he said.

"It is time for you, Kim Hyun-ho, to learn a bit more about this community."

I listened to Odin with all ears.

“When you look at all the examinees, I can be considered as someone on the stronger side. Since, so far, I have never failed an exam.”

“I can see that. I was really awed by the aura sword you used at The Brown Mountain.”

Odin smiled and said.

“That is right. I am on the strong side. But as strong as I may be, I cannot say that stronger people don’t exist. Since there are some monsters that have passed the 50th exam.”

I flinched when he said the 50th exam.

Then just how long have those people lived in the Arena.

“Of course, there are lots of those examinees that have nearly reached the ultimate destination in the exam. But what do you think is the reason the exam still continues?”

“Why is that?”

“It is for money.”

“.....?!”

“In order to make money, they purposely do not clear the exams. Even when the mission is given to them, they focus solely on gather majeong in Arena.”

“But if they don’t do the mission...”

“They get minus karma. So before then, they get rid of the karma they do have.”

Odin continued his explanation.

First off, they steadily clear the missions and receive the karma prizes and get stronger.

And then at a certain point when they have become strong enough, they begin concentrating on collecting majeong.

For a while they gather majeong here and there while clearing the mission and when they reach the point where it is no longer as easy to do the mission along with gathering the majeong, they daringly give up on the mission.

“China’s communist party is going crazy in their efforts to acquire majeong, the next generation’s energy source, in large quantities. They give a generous reward to examinees and sometimes force them to bring back majeong.”

“But not clearing the missions, they have no way of guaranteeing their survival?”

“That isn’t exactly the case. Not clearing the mission and staying in a safe place and just collecting majeong is actually safer. Rather, if you try to clear exam, you have to put your life on the line, and that’s dangerous.”

I went blank.

Giving up on the mission is safer?

That was possible?

The gods know about this situation and are leaving it alone?

Without any penalty?

“So, you’re saying there is no penalty for examinees who purposely give up on the exams?”

“Why wouldn’t there be a penalty? Minus karma is the definition of that penalty.”

“What is the effect of the minus karma?”

“Examinees that have accumulated minus karma are called ‘dropped examinees.’ If you kill a dropped examinee, you get that minus amount in karma.”

“Have you killed any?”

I asked.

Odin nodded his head.

“Just once. He was a Chinese examinee and he was strong. But he underestimated me.”

“Then the normal, average examinees must seek out these dropped examinees.”

“It is hostile relations. Because they are grand prey. Not only that, Chinese examinees kill each other for it too. After letting someone gather lots of minus karma, they kill that person and sell the karma that they get.”

I could feel my insides start churning.

That people were focusing on making money and not clearing missions and killing each other.

What kind of chaotic situation has this become?

Gods nor angels, none of them foresaw a situation like this?

Or is this situation too something that they had wanted and even planned for?

‘Just what is the true purpose of the exams?’

The rules of the universe along with the gods, how could they be allowing this to happen? Or maybe they know and simply don’t care.

It can only be surmised to be the generosity of the gods that are allowing such actions from humanity.

“Do you think all the ultimate destination of all the examinees is the same?”

“It is assumed that that is the case. It is a closely guarded secret and therefore not verified as such but it does seem that all the exams for all examinees is headed in the same direction.”

“And what is that?”

“I don’t know that either. I am just at the 20th exam so.”

Odin let me know.

“Mr. Kim Hyun-ho, be careful not to be eliminated yourself.”

“No matter the odds, that won’t happen. I want to clear all the exams and return to a safe life.”

“That is a good mentality to have. I am the same. I don’t want to fight endless battles in the Arena. I just want to spend a happy life with my daughter.”

“.....”

“Please clear your exam. Let’s finish this crazy shit and put a nail in its coffin.”

“Yes.”

We promised each other so and parted ways.

That night, I boarded onto my pre-booked flight and returned to Korea.

The inside of my head was a mess.

If the final destination for all examinees is indeed the same.....

If just one person reaches that destination and completes that exam, the exams themselves will disappear. Then all the examinees don’t have to do the exams anymore.

But the situation is that with China at the head, many nations are pursuing the collection of majeong.

If majeong becomes the natural resource energy for the next generation, would they leave alone the only way they can get the majeong? With no exams, the examinees can no longer gather the majeong.

Would those examinees just leave it alone and allow the end of their easy money-making days?

“They might even distract others from completing the exams.

At the thought that fellow examinees may distract others from their exams floods me with fear.

If I keep up in the exams, eventually there will be a time when an examinee will be

pitted against another examinee.

In that instance, I might be threatened in the real world as well.

Even after getting 5000 karma, I returned to Korea with a heavy heart.

When I got home, it was 7 pm and Min-jeong hadn't come home yet. She must have been working late.

'First, I need to think about what to buy with the karma I bought.'

I summoned my board and checked all the skills I had acquired so far.

-Showing all skills acquired by examinee Hyun-ho Kim.

-Main Skill: Spirit Summons (Intermediate Level 1)

-Assist Skill: Physical strength buff (Intermediate Level 5), Guider (Entry Level 1), Teleportation (Entry Level 4)

-Special Skill: Synthesis Skill

-Synthesis Skill: Divine Protection of the Wind (Entry Level 5), Divine Protection of Fire (Entry Level 1), Reflex (Intermediate Level 3), Flame of Life (Intermediate Level 2), Transmission (Entry Level 1), Space Bag (Entry Level 4), Shooting (Entry Level 1)

-Remaining Karma: +5,000

The first thing that came to mind was the Spirit Summons.

From that point on, my biggest strength, my main skill, I had a feeling I had to consistently increase it.

But with its level currently at Intermediate Level 1, to raise the Spirit Summons to the next level would require an incredible amount of karma.

Through the board, I checked how much karma would be needed for each level and it read as follows.

-Spirit Summons Intermediate Level 2 (-1,700)

-Spirit Summons Intermediate Level 3 (-1,900)

-Spirit Summons Intermediate Level 4 (-2,100)

So, for now, I could only get to Intermediate Level 3 with 3,600 karma.

‘How nice it was that I was able to increase the Spirit Summons by using the Tree of Life.’

The more I thought about it, the harder it was to accept the immense amount of karma that it would take for the main skill level to increase.

But if I am careless about my main skill, I probably won’t be able to be strong like Odin later.

From what I heard yesterday, Odin was able to become strong early on by concentrating on growing his main skill, his Aura Control.

“I will let you in on one secret. The skills I have don’t go beyond three. That is the method to how a mere 20th turn examinee became the strong.”

I was surprised.

He became someone great by digging one big well.

‘Now that I think of it, way before, Chun-seong Kang had like Entry Level 4 Aura Control even without using karma, didn’t he?’

I remembered.

Using his aptitude from martial arts that he honed all his life, he used that to practice his Aura Control and increase his levels.

Then likewise, can I use training to increase the Spirit Summons?

‘First off, it would be good to be in a place where there was a strong flow of energy from nature.’

Thanks to getting to the Intermediate level of the Spirit Summons, the power of nature was flowing inside my body too.

It is a mechanism where the power of the surrounding nature gives aid to my body, and the difference in power can be felt when I am atop a mountain versus in a city like I am now.

‘The spirit summons will probably go up if I spend time in Gyeryongsan Mountain like Spirituals do.’

But even doing that, I would probably have to spend years up there and it likely still won’t go up an entire level.

When I was at The Brown Mountain, I was atop the Tree of Life where the energy of nature was overflowing and I had to be there for a year for my level to barely go up by one.

Right now, its level was higher than it was then, intermediate level 1.

Without a Tree of Life, no matter how long I live in nature, it would take ages to increase my level by just one.

‘Hold up, a Tree of Life?’

I suddenly recalled all the time I spent raising the Tree of Life.

The pine tree and the maple tree and the Thuja tree too, after eating my flames of life and growing, they became of Trees of Life.

The flame of life is a synthesis skill that was created by combining Spirit Summons (Kasa) with a healing potion.

Thus, in the flame of life is the power of a spirit, thus, it also contains the power of nature.

“Sylph, Kasa!”

-Meow

-Bark, bark!

For the first time in a long time, Sylph and Kasa were summoned.

Having become an intermediate spirit, Sylph's appearance was the same but she became twice as big.

Kasa who used to be a young puppy, having become an intermediate spirit, has now shed his young appearance and looked like he went through a rapid growth spurt. At full growth, maybe a Jindo? At a Superior Level, he will make an impressive large dog.

"Meow!"

"Grrr!"

Despite having grown larger, like always, the two are bickering atop my head for the spot.

Thank goodness they have no weight because otherwise I would have been crushed under them.

"Flame of Life!"

I made two flames of life. Because I wasn't able to get them to Future Automobile's Chairman Man-Young Han, I have these to spare.

"Okay, now look."

-Meow?

-Pant pant pant.....!

Sylph and Kasa stared at the flames of life.

"Do you guys, perhaps, want to eat these?"

-Meow!

-Bark!

The two spirits immediately started nodding their heads. Especially Kasa, he looked like he was about to drool.

"If you eat these, can you guys grow?"

This time too, the two spirits nodded their heads.

‘My train of thought was right!’

If I can raise the Spirit Summons level using the flame of life, there would be no need to use karma for my main skill.

“Okay, eat.”

I gave one flame of life to each spirit.

Sylph and Kasa thoroughly enjoyed their flames.

Even then, Kasa whined and scratched with his front paws for more.

“Later, I’ll give you more later.”

As soon as Chairman Man-young Han’s treatment is over, I’ll give the flames to the spirits.

It might even be possible to raise the spirit levels a few times over during this rest period.

‘Then I will use my karma to increase my other skill levels.’

I started spending my karma prize.

First off, the reflex skill

“I will raise my reflex skill to Superior Level 1.”

-2,500 karma will be used to increase reflex (Synthesis Skill) to Superior Level 1.

-Reflex (Synthesis Skill): have great know-how in moving/maneuvering one’s body

*Superior Level 1: Exhibit mastery in all things that require bodily movements

-Remaining karma: +2,500

Of the skills I have, reflex is the most important following the synthesis skill. With this,

I don't need other martial arts skills.

'Shall I try it out?'

I took out the violin from my space bag.

Of all the books, I picked the hardest piece I know.

Despite not having played in quite a while, I'm able to play without much difficulty. My fingers are so abled, like they were playing an easy song.

'This is superior!'

At the nearly fraudulent ability of my reflex skill, I felt overjoyed.

Chapter 98

A New Birth (1)

The feeling of my fingers freely pressing on the strings was such a strange feeling that I became immersed in playing for a while.

With a fast tempo, I played through the entire book that I had previously studied and I was in awe.

“This is so broken!”

Even when I think about it, the reflex is an unbelievable skill.

Amongst the assist skills that can be got by karma, there is a cooking, sparring/fighting, and a swordsmanship skill. There is even a music playing skill.

But with the reflex skill alone, I can do all those things.

Using one skill to be good at multiple assist skills!

Now I have 2,500 karma left.

What should I do with these?

I looked through all the skills I had so far.

First of all, pass on the spirit summons.

I raised the reflex just now to superior level 1 so pass on that too.

There’s no need to raise the guider another level, maybe the teleportation?

“Show me Teleportation.”

At my order, the words on the board changed.

-Teleportation (assist skill): leap through space in the direction you want. Think of the desired direction and say “teleportation.”

*Entry level 4: distance 9 m. cool down time 5 minutes.

It’s just entry level 4 and the cool down time is only 5 minutes.

If I raise the level a bit more, maybe the cool down time will disappear altogether?

If the cool down time disappears, I can use the teleportation repeatedly and it’ll be incredibly useful.

“Show me the distance and cool down time for each level of teleportation.”

The board must have understood what I said because it shows me the information I want. It’s a very interesting piece of AI.

-Teleportation (Assist Skill) showing the distance and cool down time by level.

*Entry level 4: 9 m, 5 min

*Entry level 5: 12 m, 1 min (-300)

*Intermediate level 1: 12 m, 10 x day (-400)

*Intermediate level 2: 15 m, 20 x day (-500)

*Intermediate level 3: 15 m, 30 x day (-600)

*Intermediate level 4: 15 m, 40 x day (-700)

-Remaining karma: +2,500

Starting at intermediate level 1 the cool down time disappears and is instead replaced with ten times a day.

‘So, it means without the cool down, I can use it ten times one after the other without pause.’

Starting at intermediate level 2, the distance doesn’t increase but just the number of

times I can use it a day increases.

'I think it will be good just to get it to intermediate level 1.'

I felt that raising it higher than that would be a waste of karma.

"I will raise teleportation o intermediate level 1."

-Using 700 karma to raise teleportation (assist skill) to intermediate level 1.

-Teleportation (assist skill): leap through space in the direction you want. Think of the desired direction and say "teleportation."

*Intermediate level 1: distance 12 m, 10 x day (resets at midnight)

-Remaining karma: +1,800

Continuing on, I brought up the flame of life. Because the flame of life could be used to raise the spirit summons, it will be good to raise its power.

"With the current karma, I will raise my flame of life as much as possible."

-Showing all the stats if you are to use all remaining karma on flame of life (synthesis skill).

-Flame of life (synthesis skill): blow in a flame of life and revive life. Can be used twice a day.

*Intermediate level 4: can be used for: strength recovery, anti-aging, illness, and curses.

-Remaining karma: +500

1,300 karma is used and I will have left 500.

I nodded my head.

"I'll do this."

Pat!

The board started shining.

-With 1,300 karma, the flame of life (synthesis skill) will be raised to intermediate level 4.

-Remaining karma: +500

After that, the Divine Protection of the Wind that was at entry level 5; I raised it to intermediate level 1.

It's just a one level difference but the entry to intermediate level power difference is completely different which is why I did it.

-Using 400 karma to raise the Divine Protection of the Wind (synthesis skill) to intermediate level 1.

-Divine protection of wind (synthesis skill): ride a strong wind. Gains power from using the user's concentration, skill level, and spirit summons level.

*Intermediate level 1: duration time 50 minutes, cool down time 25 minutes.

-Remaining karma: +100

'100 karma?'

It is exactly enough karma to get a new assist skill.

'Should I use skill synthesis to put together ingredients for another skill?'

I first asked the board to show me all the skills I could get.

I flit through the list and there were a lot of interesting ones but there wasn't one in particular that I needed.

'It would be good if it was related to shooting. Maybe a skill that could increase the power of the bullet... Huh?'

I thought of something good.

'What if I itemize bullets and use them as ingredients in the skill synthesis?'

Why hadn't I thought of this before!

I immediately took out the magnum.357 bullets from the space bag.

"I want to itemize this."

The words on the board switched around.

-Itemizing ten Magnum.357 bullets will cost 1 karma. Would you like to itemize?

-Remaining karma: +100

1 karma per 10 bullets.

Will it use one bullet if I use them as ingredients for skill synthesis?

Ten of the magnum bullets have itemized and my remaining karma had been reduced to 99.

"Skill synthesis!"

-Please select the skill or item you wish to combine.

1. Skills available for synthesis: spirit summons (Sylph), spirit summons (Kasa), physical strength buff, guider, teleportation
2. Items available for synthesis: Mosin-Nagant, Neilson H2 (quantity 2), magnum bullets (quantity 10)

*Items used for synthesis will be used up.

I'll go through the list.

"Sylph and magnum bullet."

-Synthesizing spirit summons (Sylph) and.357 bullets.

-Synthesis fails.

"Kasa and magnum bullet."

-Synthesizing spirit summons (Kasa) and.357 bullets.

“Won’t work again. Then maybe the physical strength buff and magnum bullet?”

As light comes from the board. This time is a success!

-Synthesis success. You have acquired the ammo impact perk.

-One magnum.357 bullet has been used.

-Ammo impact (synthesis skill): increases the surface penetration of the bullets.

*Entry level 1

“Nice!”

I pumped my fists up in the air and feel a pang of delight.

I got exactly what I wanted. A skill that made my bullets more powerful.

If I added the power of the spirits to this, the power would be even greater of the bullets.

‘Let’s keep going.’

“I will synthesize guider with magnum bullet.”

-Guider (assist skill) will synthesize with magnum.357 bullet.

-Synthesis failed. You have already received the shooting skill (synthesis skill).

‘So, this can happen too.’

Now for the last one I tried synthesizing the teleportation and magnum bullet.

And this time too, light came from the board. It was the reaction of a success synthesis.

-Synthesis success. You have obtained the Reload skill (synthesis skill)

-One magnum.357 bullet has been used.

-Using the reload skill (synthesis skill) during shooting will cause the gun to be automatically reloaded. You must have available bullets in the item bag or space bag.

‘Whoa.’

This too is definitely a skill I needed.

The bullets in my space bag will automatically be used during shooting!

This eliminates the hassle of taking the bullets out and placing them one by one in person.

This reload skill doesn’t have levels to it. This is just it.

‘Well, it’s good I don’t have to worry about its levels.’

With this, I had finished using my karma

It’s actually an incredible amount of karma I just used, equal to \$1m.

‘In theory, a million dollars... ’

It’s such a large sum that I can’t even wrap my head around it. So, I don’t even feel the pain of using it.

Going forward, if I come into large sums of money, I’m going to turn it into karma and do it like this again.

Money, I can always make more of, but karma I can’t always make.

‘I will clear all the exams no matter what.’

My determination grew.

I will beat the ultimate goal of these exams and finish this crap once and for all.

When all the exams are clear and examinees are no longer on this earth the majeong that will be used as the new energy source won’t be attainable anymore either.

But that isn’t my problem to fix.

Those examinees and their nations that are crazy for the majeong, they can go to hell.



Korean arena research center.

At the top of the building, the 10th floor, at the end of the hallway was an office where a middle-aged man was looking at the monitor.

On the monitor was the latest article on a news portal site.

[Jinseong Electronics' new product release, it might be the 'Park Jin-seong recovery effect']

"So, he really is all better."

With a fat build and half bald, the middle-aged man was closely looking at a picture of a smiling chairman Park Jin-seong.

On the name board on the desk it read 'Chief Kim Joong-tae'.

He was this agency's head, Chief Kim Joong-tae.

On the desk was a file related to Kim Hyun-ho.

Examine Kim Hyun-ho.

From what he knew, he was an unlucky examinee who had lost all his teammates in the 3rd exam.

He had a special main skill, the spirit summons, that made him exciting, but there was no hope of his survival so he was given up on. Rooting and supporting a rookie with no hopes of survival would be a waste of resources.

Coincidentally, that was when he had received a call from Chairman Park Jin-seong.

Chairman Park Jin-seong had always been generous with his donations to the agency and it was difficult to deny his request.

The chief was going to throw him away anyway so he un-reluctantly gave up Kim

Hyun-ho without much thought.

But then afterwards, Chairman Park Jin-seong, who had been slowly dying from illness, became healthy and lively.

How was he supposed to interpret this?

With his suspicions, he put an employee onto the task of surveilling examinee Kim Hyun-ho.

Surprisingly, Kim Hyun-ho was still alive.

The hopeless Kim Hyun-ho was still alive.

About now he would be a 6th turn examinee but despite that, he was still alive.

Clearing the exams on your own is something impossible unless one was a pretty strong veteran examinee.

This means there was an external helper.

Chairman Park Jin-seong has acquired external assistance for Kim Hyun-ho.

Why?

Obtaining an external helper required quite a bit of money.

Why did he do such a thing for a mere 3rd turn examinee like Kim Hyun-ho?

There could only be one reason.

Chairman Park Jin-seong's completely recovered appearance explained that reason well.

'Kim Hyun-ho has the ability to heal diseases!'

"Damn it, I lost a big one."

Chief Kim Joong-tae started swearing.

He threw him away thinking he was garbage but it turns out he was the goose that lays the golden eggs.

“Damn, I should have caught on when Chairman Park Jin-seong made his request.”

The ability to cure illnesses.

The examinee with that great power... if he were in the research center, that ability could have been used for great monetary gains.

It's not like there are just one or two rich old folks in the world.

Everyone gets sick and dies.

And everyone wants to live.

Chief Kim Joong-tae felt angry that he basically had his treasure taken away right in front of his eyes.

Regardless of how, he wanted to somehow use Kim Hyun-ho for some gains.

But how?

How can I use Kim Hyun-ho for my own benefit?

The answer was simple.

“There are those crazy for money in neighboring countries.”

Chief Kim Joong-tae took out an old school flip phone from the inside pocket of his suit.

He looked through his address book and found the name he's looking for.

[Chang-wee Lee]

He pushed the call button.

The calling out tone sounds and a young man answers the phone.

-What is it, Chief Kim Joong-tae.

“What do you think?”

Chief Kim Joong-tae spoke back in fluent Chinese. When he was in the national intelligence service, he was placed in China.

-Do you have any information worth sharing?

“I have some very precious information you’ll want.”

-What kind of information? If it is good, you’ll be paid well for it.

Chief Kim Joong-tae smiled wryly.

“Jinseong Group, Chairman Park Jin-seong.”

-.....

A silence falls on them both.

The young Chinese man speaks.

-100,000 dollars.

“Puah!”

Chairman Kim Joong-tae replied by spitting on the floor.

-A million dollars.

“You guys are always like that. Saying you’ll pay well, pay well, and then trying to get it for nothing.”

-5 million dollars. If you don’t like it then fine. We’re looking for other routes anyway.

“Fine, let’s not.”

He folded his phone closed.

A moment later, a call came from Chang-wee lee.

“How much are you going to pay?”

-10 million dollars, but if it isn't good information, I'll kill you myself.

“Fine.”

Chief Kim Joong-tae wasn't one to back down.



‘What kind of call was that?’

Cha Ji-hye had something to report which was why she had come but she didn't go in and had stopped in front of the door instead.

Because she could hear a conversation happening in Chinese from inside.

Chapter 99

A New Birth (Part 2)

It was after the call was over.

Knock knock.

At the sudden knock, chief Kim Joong-tae quickly removed the Kim Hyun-ho file that was atop his desk.

“Who is it?”

“This is Cha Ji-hye.”

“Oh, come in.”

During that quick conversation, chief Kim Joong-tae had a lot going on in his mind.

The knock that sounded was as if it had been waiting for him to finish his call.

She had been waiting in front of the door until the call was over.

Then did she hear the conversation? Does Cha Ji-hye know Chinese?

‘No, as far as I know, she doesn’t know Chinese.’

The door opened and Cha Ji-hye walked in.

In a white suit and red blazer and banging body.

As always, she came walking in with a wide stride, Cha Ji-hye gave her report.

“We have discovered someone who we suspect is a new examinee. A social media text was posted and we have hacked their ID and password and deleted it.”

“Really? What turn examinee do you suspect them to be?”

“Without anyone for support and afraid all alone is the feeling we got. I suspect it is a first turn examinee.”

“I see.”

Their eyes met for just a second.

A short moment's eye contact.

Very short. Just an instant.

“Well. I'll leave you, sir.”

“Mm, yes. Good work.”

Cha Ji-hye headed back out of the office.

‘Whew, I don't think she knows anything. I need to be careful going forward.’

Because he had become so out of touch with the outside world and had started acting like the king of a secret research agency, chief Kim Joong-tae started blaming himself for being so carefree.



Chief Kim Joong-tae's own opinion of himself being too lax was completely correct.

Unlike him, Cha Ji-hye was positive that there was something suspicious going on.

She didn't know Chinese well. But she did understand some words.

Jinseong Group.

Money (Qian).

How much (Duo shao).

And from the window she could see what the reflection was of what was on chief Kim Joong-tae's computer monitor.

A picture of chairman Park Jin-seong.

That was enough for Cha Ji-hye.

‘He’s trying to sell Kim Hyun-ho’s identity to the Chinese.’

There were bad rumors floating around even since chief Kim Joong-tae’s national intelligence service days.

He wasn’t some inefficient pencil pusher or figurehead.

He has a dirty past.

The reason a man like him got this position in a large administration was because he was a figure with a meteoric rise in China.

And now it was without a doubt that he was trying to sell Kim Hyun-ho’s identity to the Chinese examinees.

‘I have to stop him.’

Kim Hyun-ho lost all his comrades and, even after becoming alone, he survived. He is still alive so that meant he cleared his 6th exam.

This was the potential of the competent Kim Hyun-ho.

But any target of the Chinese examinees would be in danger. Now as a mere 6th turn examinee, Kim Hyun-ho alone wouldn’t be able to defend himself from all the Chinese examinees.

‘I have to start tailing the chief.’

If it was information regarding chief Park Jin-seong’s recovery it’s a big deal.

They’ll want the information tonight or immediately tomorrow.

Chief Kim Joong-tae always had a set routine he followed every day but he will have to personally pull the file with Kim Hyun-ho’s identity.

If possible, she must stop the transaction and at best she must leave the location of the

transaction with proof and use it to cause chief Kim Joong-tae's downfall.

Kim Hyun-ho was no longer a part of the Korean Arena Research Agency but as the one that was responsible for him while he still was, she still felt a sense of responsibility.

'I know what I have to do.'

First of all, she sent a warning message text to Kim Hyun-ho.

[Be careful of the Chinese. Be cautious and alert. No contact.]

To be careful, she sent the text on the emergency burner phone she always carried.

Cha Ji-hye decided that this should be more than enough information for him to understand the situation.

He has been with chairman Park Jin-seong so he should know his way about this stuff.

And there was no way Kim Hyun-ho wouldn't know that his skills would eventually become the target of other nations either.

That evening, having taken the helicopter off the island, she hid the car she had parked near the helipad and staked out in it.

From the entrance of the helipad, chief Kim Joong-tae's BMW 7 appeared.

She left a good distance between them and started her pursuit.

Chief Kim Joong-tae was heading towards the Incheon Seollin-dong Chinatown.

'As expected.'

The Chinese person that the exchange is happening with is already in Korea.

It meant that he or she was already in Korea before they had heard anything from chief Kim Joong-tae. Or came as soon as they heard.

Regardless, this person had been searching for Kim Hyun-ho.

Crazy with the greed to not lose the goose that lays the golden eggs.

‘Should I go in now?’

Getting chief Kim Joong-tae now and stealing his file of Kim Hyun-ho, she thought about this option.

But no matter how she thought about it, that idea was simply too rash.

The opponent was the chief and he has a straight line to the blue house (connected to the white house) for sure.

Not only would she not be able to handle the aftermath, but doing that won’t block the transfer of Kim Hyun-ho’s related information into Chinese hands.

She was going to get proof of this back-alley transaction and then use that to cause his downfall. That was the best idea.

For now, she could only hope that Kim Hyun-ho can protect himself.

She sent him a warning so whether it is chairman Park Jin-seong or the Denmark examinee group’s Odin, he should be able to utilize his sources to defend himself.

She got out of her car and continued to tail chief Kim Joong-tae.

Chief Kim Joong-tae went into a tranquil restaurant with a Chinese owner.

Cha Ji-hye wasn’t able to go in and instead had to watch the restaurant through a window from outside.

Thankfully, she could see where chief Kim Joong-tae was sitting.

‘Who is the one meeting him?’

With a silent camera, she was getting ready to take pictures as she scouted through the window.

Then a man appeared.

A young man with a tall build and short hair. He looked to be about in his young 30’s.

Cha Ji-hye gasped in shock.

‘Lee Chang-wee!’

The bigshot of the Chinese examinees.

In the formal rankings, he does not exist but amongst all the examinees in the world he is considered as one of the best.

The way he was able to become so strong was by being a tool for the Chinese communist influencers.

He was getting other examinees to work for politicians and he himself became an influential figure amongst examinees.

He was basically their commander in chief.

Building strong relationships with those in power and using all manners of ugly methods, he acquired massive amounts of karma and got stronger.

‘No way, is Lee Chang-wee himself going to do this?’

If he really was pursuing this matter himself, Kim Hyun-ho would be in a desperately dangerous situation.

But thankfully, Lee Chang-wee wasn’t someone that put himself out there easily. He took care of most things by using those under him.



“It’s been a long time.”

Chief Kim Joong-tae greeted him with a smile.

Lee Chang-wee sat down across from him and gestured.

“The info.”

“I have to check the deposit first.”

“I have to check that the information is worth the deposit first.”

“It’s not like I don’t know that you guys check out the information and then say it’s not worth it when it is or just not pay straight out”

“You wish to die?”

“Tsk tsk.”

Chief Kim Joong-tae clicked his tongue.

“How will we make a deal this way. I am making a reasonable request and you threaten me? Deposit it into a swiss account while I watch.”

“If the information isn’t good, be prepared to die.”

“You already said that earlier.”

Lee Chang-wee smirked.

“Pretending to be a veteran is comic. You’re a man with his tail between his legs.”

“What?”

Chief Kim Joong-tae’s face looked embarrassed for the first time.

“Tail?”

“She’s one of yours, isn’t she? The young woman.”

At the words young woman, chief Kim Joong-tae recalled Cha Ji-hye.

‘Damn! Did I get caught then?’

It was obvious that chief Kim Joong-tae was in a predicament.

Then, Lee Chang-wee did something completely unexpected.

“Well, she’s taking pictures, let’s assume some poses.”

Saying that, Lee Chang-wee took a stack of cash out of his inside pocket and placed it on the table.

“What, what are you doing?”

“What do you mean, I’m giving her a good picture. I’m rather photogenic so it’s not a problem, but not you, huh?”

“Pfft...”

Abruptly, a blatant picture of chief Kim Joong-tae receiving money from Lee Chang-wee had been taken.

He had no idea that he would be had this easily and was completely flustered.

A bit later, after calming himself down, chief Kim Joong-tae spoke.

“9 million (won).” (9,000 USD)

“5 million (won).”

“Now listen!”

“4.5 million. It will keep going down. Mr. Hyung, your back-alley transaction has a picture taken.”

“Fuck. Fine.”

Lee Chang-wee had a huge smile on his face.

“Who told you to lose your senses? Tsk tsk, being tracked. That’s the level of a Korean spy for you.”

“Enough of that, take care of it now.”

“That’s what I’m thinking.”

Said Lee Chang-wee.

“Teleport.”

That instant, Lee Chang-wee disappeared.



“Kuk!”

The moment Lee Chang-wee disappeared, Cha Ji-hye reflexively rolled her body to the right.

Pat!

By just a hair, Lee Chang-wee’s grasped nothing but empty space.

“Oh! You dodged?”

To Cha Ji-hye, it was Chinese that she couldn’t understand but she got what he meant through his tone and body language.

Getting right up, Cha Ji-hye tried to secretly push her finger to send the pictures to her email.

But Lee chan-wee didn’t give her that chance.

The moment Lee Chang-wee’s figure became blurry, Cha Ji-hye boldly ran forward and threw a flying knee kick.

Puk!

It was blocked by Lee Chang-wee’s elbow.

No matter how small, she successfully put a stop to his attack.

“Haha! Again? You’re an impressive woman! If you were an examinee, you would have become a big shot. That is a pity.”

Lee Chang-wee showed her something in his hand.

“How is this in my hand?”

“Kuk!”

Cha Ji-hye squeaks when she realized that her smartphone was stolen.

Bba du duk! (cr-uuuush!)

Lee Chang-wee put all his strength into his fist and the smartphone was crushed to bits.

“I will send you to heaven with a full corpse. Summon, Kaiser Silver Longsword.”

A dark silvered light longsword appeared in his right hand.

To the end, Cha Ji-hye showed no signs of fear.

Even at the moment her heart was pierced, to the end, she just kept repeating something over and over.

As if making a wish.

Like leaving a will.

Kwajik-

The dark silver longsword penetrated her heart.

“.....!”

Cha Ji-hye stared Lee Chang-wee straight in the face, and accepted death. Her lips quivered and then stopped.

“Retrieve.”

The longsword disappeared.

For a while, Lee Chang-wee admired the disaster he had created and then tilted his head.

“I can’t tell what it was you were mumbling. It would have been good if I had a translation skill.”

With the teleportation skill, Lee Chang-wee disappeared again.

Just the corpse of the bleeding Cha Ji-hye was left dumped in the dark alley.



When she came to, she first felt a flush heat.

The humidity and heat mixed and took over her whole body.

When she opened her eyes, she saw a dense jungle.

A blue sky blocked with huge leaves.

A lively sun shining down.

And then a rectangular board about the size of a notebook appeared.

-Examinee Cha Ji-hye. Your desire for the exams was heard.

-It was deemed you have the aptitude necessary and you were selected to become an examinee.

-If you wish to become an examinee, select confirm, if not, select deny.

With a husky voice, she has to squeeze out, she says

“Confirm.”

Then the words on the board changed.

-Name: Cha Ji-hye

-Class: 1

-Karma: 0

-Mission: survive the duration of the time limit.

-Time limit: 30 minutes

Survive.

30 minutes.

Cha Ji-hye got up right away.

With a sharp eye, she surveyed her surroundings.

A jungle with lots of marshes.

Heat and humidity.

‘Lizardman. Mud Golem. A 1st turn level lizardman.’

A new examinee was born.

Chapter 100

A New Birth (Part 3)

First off, Cha Ji-hye went towards a nearby tree.

After checking out what the enemy was, her plan was to avoid it from atop a tree.

“Shiik.....!”

The monster that appeared making a wily sound was the expected lizardman.

Its stature was only slightly smaller than a grown man.

Except for the abdomen, nearly the entire body was covered in scales.

A flitting tongue and sharp fingernails and toenails.

This was the real version of the thing she had only seen illustrated before.

It is only just the one.

Cha Ji-hye decided to fight.

The opponent was one that she could defeat.

She only needed to survive for 30 minutes, but if she fights and beats it that would be even better.

‘I just have to be watch out for the nails and teeth.’

With her guard up, Cha Ji-hye slowly approached the lizardman.

“Shik!”

The impatient lizardman rushed forward first.

Instantly, she dodged with a side step and then a left jab.

Shu pak!

“Shwik!”

The jab landed on the lizardman’s protruding jaw.

Continuing on, she kept hitting him with left jabs followed by right hooks to the mouth.

Puk puk!

“Shwiik!”

The lizardman shook its head back and forth and shakily started stepping back from her.

The shwik shwik sound rang out loud as if it was getting angrier.

A lizardman’s weak points were the jaw and the scale-less abdominal area. That’s why she targeted the jaw.

‘It’s all going according to plan.’

The lizardman’s eyes starting looking towards her slightly extended left hand. It started to recognize her punching pattern.

If that’s the case, this just became a lot easier.

As if she was about to throw a jab, she lightly feinted with her left fist. The lizardman’s body flinched a bit at that motion.

Within a split second, her right hand threw a straight at its jaw.

Bbuk!

“Shwik!”

The straight landed perfectly on its jaw.

The jaw wasn't a crucial weak point but the point was to disorient the lizardman.

Using that timing, Cha Ji-hye lunged forward and boldly clinched his head with both arms, then threw a knee at his midsection.

Bbuk!

Her knee went in hard straight to its abdomen!

The look of agony finally appeared on the lizardman's face.

"Shwik! Shiiik!"

Now that he was really pissed off, lizardman haphazardly flung his nails around.

But she had already let go of her clinch and backed away so his attack wasn't able to reach Cha Ji-hye.

"Shwiik!"

With a really angry demeanor, the lizardman chased after her.

Cha Ji-hye again lifted her left fist.

She got its attention with her fists and with her right leg that was firm as a deer she put all her power into a kick.

Bbuuk!

A perfect kick to the solar plexus!

"Shik!"

The lizardman that had been running towards her was suddenly sent flying backwards.

Puk!

She kicked again and it landed on its chest.

As the lizardman's body faltered backwards, Cha Ji-hye quickly lowered her body and

kicked out the lizardman's back legs.

The lizardman lost its balance and tumbled to the ground.

Cha Ji-hye quickly looked around her.

She grabbed the closest rock she saw.

With the sharp end, she smashed down on the lizardman's face.

Bbuk!

"Shwiik!"

"Hu aab!"

Using both hands while yelling, she smashed the rock down again and again.

Bbu kuk!

The sound of flesh ripping apart permeated the air.

The lizardman's face was covered in scales as well, but the right eye had no such cover.

"Shiiiiik-!"

A strange screaming sound came from the lizardman's throat.

Jjuuk! Jjuk! Bbuuk!

Cha Ji-hye grit her teeth and kept smashing down on the lizardman's face with the rock.

She kept smashing at the part she's ripped.

Green blood spurted out.

At last, there were no more sounds of screaming. The lizardman had stopped moving and was lying there dead underneath her.

“Huuk, huk!”

While she tried to catch her breath, Cha Ji-hye stood up.

“Board retrieval.”

She retrieved her board and checked out how much time was left. There’s roughly 17 minutes remaining.

Cha Ji-hye climbed up a tree and passed the rest of her time up there.

It was because the bloody smell of the dead lizardman might attract other monsters or wild animals.

When all 17 minutes were up, a door appeared in front of her.

‘The exam door!’

She fearlessly opened the door and walked into the blinding light as she approached whatever was waiting for her inside.

She got a cozy feeling as the environment changed.

The sky and the ground, everything was white.

A completely empty white space with nothing in it.

Cha Ji-hye looked around her.

When she looked up, even she couldn’t help but be startled.

A baby angel was right above her head and looking straight down at her. From a distance where it could nearly touch her.

“Are you well?”

Playfully, the baby angel greeted her.

Cha Ji-hye looked the baby angel up and down.

An oddly revolting face.

A mocking tone of voice.

And a dangling small.....

“The angel in charge of examinee Kim Hyun-ho?”

“Wow, have you heard lots about me?”

“Mostly bad.”

“Hehehe.”

The baby angel chuckled.

With small wings like a sparrows, flapping hectically, flying around.

Cha Ji-hye could understand why Kim Hyun-ho had to grit his teeth and hated the baby angel so much.

“Aw, that isn’t so. He pretends not to like me but he actually really does.”

‘Understandably unlikeable.’

Cha Ji-hye got more affirmation of such.

“Well, anyway, I was surprised. You are the first to so aptly pass the first exam. You showed the experience and skill of a veteran examinee.”

“Do I need to retrieve the board to check my results?”

“Whoa, you know about that as well too.”

“Board retrieval.”

-Name: Cha Ji-hye

-Class: 3

-Karma: +400

-Mission: rest until the next exam

-Time limit: 10 days

Class 3, 400 karma.

It's a decent grade.

"Karma prize. I wish to acquire the physical strength buff."

Cha Ji-hye used her karma without any hesitation.

The words on the board started changing.

-Physical strength buff (assist skill) entry level 3 has been acquired. Acquisition possible from entry level 4. Do you wish to acquire?

-Physical strength buff (assist skill): strengthens all physical aspects

*Entry level 4: gain the body of a specialty trained soldier. (-250)

-Remaining karma: +400

"Acquire."

Pat!

A light came out from the board and seeped into Cha Ji-hye's body.

-Using 250 karma to raise the physical strength buff (assist skill) to entry level 4.

-Remaining karma: +150

Cha Ji-hye inspected her body and repeatedly clenched and unclenched her fists.

'I can definitely feel that I got stronger.'

A feeling of confidence and strength.

This is what the examinees must have always felt.

‘I should leave the remaining karma for now.’

Having made the decisions easily, Cha Ji-hye started talking to the baby angel.

“I have a request.”

“What is it?”

“You can probably read my thoughts but seeing as how you’re asking me, of course Kim Hyun-ho dislikes you.”

“Hehehe, is it a request to become a team with examinee Kim Hyun-ho? You can’t.”

Right.

Cha Ji-hye, having become an examinee, wanted to become teammates with Kim Hyun-ho.

She thought it would be of great benefit to Kim Hyun-ho who had lost all his teammates.

“I really can’t?”

“You have now only just passed the first exam, you cannot be teamed with examinee Kim Hyun-ho.”

The baby angel disgustingly started fishing in his ear as he spoke.

“Even if you were a 6th turn examinee, getting to a level similar to examinee Kim Hyun-ho is unknown.”

“What does that mean?”

“That person, you see, is setting a new record every exam. Also very recently during his resting period he has used a strange method to obtain more karma.”

Cha Ji-hye was astonished by Kim Hyun-ho’s potential.

Going on through the 6th exam with new records all the way!

So even though by exam he's a 6th turn, in practical terms he may be stronger than an examinee with twice the amount of exams under their belt.

Cha Ji-hye thought things over carefully.

A bit later she said.

"Then I have a different request."

"That one's okay."

This time, the baby angel read her mind instead of listening to her request and answered right away.

Ddak!

When the baby angel flicked his finger, the exam door appeared.

"An examinee that wants to go straight into the second exam without resting after the first exam. This is a first."

Without hesitation, Cha Ji-hye opened the exam door and went through. Without a second thought.



"Oppa, don't you think I got a bit fat lately?"

Min-jeong was in front of the vanity looking at her body in the mirror.

A yellow lingerie with a pretty design dizzily was simulating my eyes.

"Not even a little."

I gave a plain and model answer.

Min-jeong's body is far from a body firmed from working out and exercising.

But her waist is skinny and a little fat on her hips and lower belly is cute, just the perfect body.

...if I said that then all she would hear is 'fat' which is why I gave the good and casual answer.

"Aw, actually take a good look. I think I've got fat lately. It must be because I'm eating more after learning how to cook."

She wanted to get rid of that little bit of fat, do you want to look like a clothes hanger?

"Right now is just perfect. I just want to save you just the way you are right now."

"So you're saying I did get fat? Right?"

Damn!

Is she saying she wants to fight? Have we been so uneventful that she's bored?

After thinking it over I tried one answer.

"Come over here, so I can take a good look."

I pulled Min-jeong closer to me and looked over her pale standing body. Every time my eyes rested on her body she felt embarrassed.

"Hmm, I think I'll have to touch to now."

"Aw, trying that again!"

Min-jeong began to fuss.

But with my extreme strength, I lifted her up and laid her down on the floor.

As I kissed her firmly on her neck, Min-jeong let out a gasp.

An astonishing reflex at superior level 1! Without restraint, I used my new mastery on her.

Min-jeong, who tried picking a fight with talks of being fat, is now losing her mind.

In the midst of having a really great time.

Ring.

My smartphone buzzed.

I kissed Min-jeong and with one hand I picked up my phone.

Hugging her with the one arm and with the other hand I checked my text message.

[Be careful of the Chinese. Careful and alert for everything. No contact.]

A number I didn't know.

But I knew instantly who this text message was from.

'Cha Ji-hye?'

If my identity has been divulged, then the leak must have been from the Korean arena research agency.

And the only person who would send me a warning like this at the Korean arena research agency was Cha Ji-hye.

'This means someone at the research agency is selling my identity to the Chinese!'

There was Odin's warning too but I had no idea that my identity would be divulged to the Chinese examinees this fast.

'Damn them!'

Remembering the Korean Arena Research Agency, I grit my teeth.

I was prepared for it but now that it's happening, it just made me angrier.

'I wonder if Cha Ji-hye is okay.'

Seeing as how it was a number I didn't know, I think she's warning me secretly. If she is found out, won't she face disciplinary action?

But knowing her, she will be able to take care of herself. She is a rather smart woman.

“Oppa?”

Having been completely immersed, Min-jeong was calling to me with dissatisfaction.

I quickly deleted the text message and put down my smartphone.

“Sorry. Were you waiting?”

“Humph, whatever.”

“What do you mean whatever? Now, let’s see how fat you got.”

“What, gross!”

“Weren’t you the one that asked me first?”

“Ah, no. Now that I think about it, I’m not fat anywhere.”

“No, if I take a close look I might see you did get fat somewhere.”

“No, I haven’t anywhere! I’m perfect!”

“There is no one in the world that is perfect. And you’ve already been aggroed by me.”

“Kyak!”

A sweet time passed.

But the inside of my head was filled with complicated thoughts about the corrupt Chinese examinees.

To dismiss those thoughts, I started hanging on to Min-jeong more.



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